Coalition and Conservative Cabinet reactions to the Communist threat to Britain 1917-1927

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Statement of originality

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Abstract

Despite plenty of fine research on the inter-war period there has, of yet, been no detailed study of the reaction in Whitehall and Westminster to the Bolshevik revolution in Russia during the Llyod George Coalition and Conservative Governments in this period. This thesis fills that gap by tackling the bitter clashes between moderates and hardliners in the Coalition and Conservative Cabinets over how, where and when Britain should handle the threat posed by Communism. It looks at the extraordinary circumstances of the age, a time of radical and profoundly uncertain political and social change, seen by many at the time as a point of potential rupture from the existing representative institutions and traditions. Starting with the Russian revolution and debate over military intervention in the Russian Civil War, it explores key flashpoints over the next ten years, including mass soldiers' strikes, rebellion on the Clyde and the General Strike of 1926. Using source material obtained from the Baldwin Archives, the Cabinet Archives, Hansard, the Chamberlain Papers and Churchill Archive, among others, the thesis maps and analyses the fluid changes in the factions within the Cabinet and the factors that influenced key political figures. Looking at the leadership of Lloyd George and Baldwin, it asks how governance was maintained over such an emotive issue and how the divides in Cabinet and the Conservative Party impacted the policy of government. This thesis argues that both premiers were able to forge a path which suited their own moderate approach but which was tempered by the views of the hardliners - a middle way that, by stretching cabinet collective responsibility to its limits helps account for the durability of both coalition and single party government in the decade following the First World War

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Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction:

The parameters of the research

The Russian Revolution of 1917 "lit up the skies with a lurid flash of hope for all who were dissatisfied with the existing order of society... (and) encouraged all the habitual malcontents in the ranks of labour to foment discord.[1]" With these words, Prime Minister David Lloyd George described the event that would usher in Bolshevik Russia and an era of social unrest and violence to Europe – an event that, combined with the rise of moderate Socialism, would change the face of British politics forever. Within the Coalition Government, members of both the Liberal and Conservative Parties were reacting to the spectre of a Bolshevik Russia and Bolshevik-inspired unrest at home, with varying degrees of uncertainty and concern. In a country already changed forever by the Great War, evolving in terms of its class structures and unsure of its place in the world or direction of travel, this new threat would find itself embedded in the debates around class unrest at home and Britain's role in the world.

This thesis will explore the debates around Bolshevism, and the threat it represented, that occurred within the British Cabinet – both of the Lloyd George Coalition and later Conservative Governments – from the Revolution in 1917 until the break of relations with Russia in 1927. It will look at the factions that emerged within the Cabinet on the issue of Bolshevism both at home and abroad, establishing their strength, membership and the arguments put forth on the key flashpoints on the topic over the decade. In terms of policy decisions taken, the thesis will gauge how the internal Cabinet debates between these groups shaped policy; it will ask who the key drivers of such policy and these debates were; and consider how the decisions made impacted on the unrest they sought to address. It will also ask the question of just how real the Bolshevik threat to Britain was during this decade, though given the parameters of the research, this will be through the prism of the Cabinet debate, potential policy paths and decisions made by all the factions examined.

Using archives, correspondence, Hansard and a variety of other sources, this thesis will cover new ground,

[1] David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, 1938, p. 1933

giving a detailed account of the internal debate within the Cabinet over these issues and finally offering a conclusion as to the impact that these debates had on the eventual decisions made. It will argue that the division on Bolshevism allowed two pragmatic Prime Ministers to formulate a middle-way policy on the matter. Here, for the first time, is a detailed analysis of the on-going conversation held in the Cabinet on the possibility of Bolshevik-inspired revolution over a ten-year period, as well as detailed studies of the views of the key individuals' views within the Cabinet. Lastly, this thesis will aim to give us a new understanding of how the Cabinet system worked during this uncertain period and answer the question of how such divides were allowed to exist in both Lloyd George's Coalition and Baldwin's Conservative administration. Here, the thesis will explore the unique circumstances of the age and show how these factors influenced the idea of collective Cabinet responsibility during the decade covered.

The period and political parties in question, and the focus on Cabinet

This thesis will focus on the debates surrounding Bolshevism on a Cabinet level and within the Lloyd George Coalition and subsequent Conservative Governments during a ten-year period, lasting from the Russian Revolution in 1917 until the breaking of relations with Russia by Great Britain in 1927.

The ten-year period chosen for this thesis represents the key period in which Britain and its politicians felt in danger of Bolshevism-inspired unrest and potential revolution. By 1917, the political situation in Britain was increasingly tense. The rise of the left, the emancipation of the working class from historical class structures, and the rise of new ideologies all signalled a time of change.[2] With these domestic issues mounting and a new landscape emerging in Europe, it is no wonder that so many Conservative politicians saw the spectre of Bolshevism as a huge threat to Britain and British Imperial security. It was an age of flux, and throughout Europe a mix of peasant radicals, fascists, Bolsheviks and other assorted revolutionaries aimed to exploit the collapse of the old powers. Bolshevism seemed to many to be spreading –from Bavaria to Finland, on to Hungary, Romania, France and perhaps even Europe as a whole.[3]

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[2] A.J. P. Taylor, *The struggle for the mastery of Europe, 1848–1918* , Oxford, 1954; Norman MacKenzie and Jeanne MacKenzie (Eds), T*he Diary of Beatrice Webb, III: 1905-1924: The Power to Alter Things,* ed, London, 1984;

[3] Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent, Europe's Twentieth Century*, London, 1998; Orlando Figes, *A People Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924*, London, 1997; Eric Hobsbawm, *An Age of Extremes, The Short Twentieth Century: 1914-1991*, London, 1995;

For many in government, both Liberal and Conservative, the high level of unemployment, poverty and social deprivation after years of total war meant that there was a real possibility that Britain was at risk from this spreading unrest. Overy, among others, discusses the conditions in which ordinary people in Britain were living at the time and the political anxiety that arose from this. It was a time of such uncertainty that many had become convinced that the age of capitalism was at an end.[4] Adding to this societal uncertainty were the new ideas being explored across Europe, all of them seemingly designed to replace the apparently decaying economic framework that the Western World was struggling to maintain. With this view entering the mainstream, and the prominence of many cultural figures who expounded it – Beatrice and Sidney Webb, H.G Wells and Albert Schweitzer to name but four – it is no wonder that many Conservative politicians became more and more concerned about the potential threat of Bolshevism in Britain.[5] As Nick Lloyd argues, this fear was also fanned by the fact that hundreds of thousands of British troops were also waiting to be brought home, many of them expecting the "land fit for heroes" that they had been promised – a fiction given the social deprivation to which most would return. There was a further belief that, given the economic hardships that these men suffered and the brutality that they had witnessed during their time in the trenches, they would be more militant, and less likely to abide by the normal constraints of society.[6]

With this fear and the rise of Bolshevism and Socialism throughout Europe and Britain, it is therefore perhaps unsurprising that the issue would become a major debating point for Cabinet. The fear around this threat would last a decade, though most of the rationale behind it remained the same as described above. With strikes ongoing throughout 1918 until 1923, including in the armed forces and police, the issue seemed to be escalating. The build up to and then the General Strike itself in 1926 represented the high-water mark of the threat and saw Cabinet debates on the issue reaching a zenith. This action of the combined trade unions might within Britain, spurred on by Bolshevik agitators and extremists, saw violence spill onto the

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[4] Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age. Britain Between the Wars*, Penguin, London, 2009; Sidney Webb, *The Decay of Capitalist Civilisation*, Ayer and Co Publishing, 1923; H.G Wells, *The Salvaging of Civilisation*, London, 1921; Albert Schweitzer, *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilisation: The Philosophy of Civilisation*, Part 1, London, 1923;

[5] Sylvia Margulies. *The Pilgrimage to Russia. The Soviet Union and the Treatment of Foreigners*, Madison, 1968; Louise Grace Shaw, *Attitudes of the British Political Elite Towards the Soviet Union*, D&S, 13, 1, 2002

[6] Nick Lloyd, *Hundred Days, The End of the Great War*, Viking, London, 2013; Jon Lawrence, Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain, *Journal of Modern History*, 75, 3, 2003; Stephen R. Ward, Intelligence Surveillance of British Ex-Servicemen, 1918-1920, *The Historical Journal*, 16, 1,1973; Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-To-Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare*, London, 2000

streets of every major city within the UK, driving troops and strikers to face each other across the nation. This thesis will close by looking at the Arcos Raid and the resultant breaking off of relations with Russia. The reason for this endpoint is clear – it represents a clear end to Britain "putting up" with the actions of Bolshevik Russia in agitating for unrest and revolution within the United Kingdom and amongst its Empire and sees the faction of the Cabinet most opposed to Russia and Bolshevism victorious in this symbolic action. It also comes after the General Strike, which as this thesis will suggest was the most dangerous point for the nation in terms of potential mass violence and revolution. The fact that this threat passed and the unions' greatest weapon failed to bring them victory, or the extremists on their periphery the chance to change the course of events themselves, represents an end to the real fears among Conservatives that Bolshevik-inspired revolution could happen at home.

For the purpose of this study, I have chosen to explore the factions and debates in the Cabinet during both the Lloyd George Coalition and the Conservative Governments until 1927. This thesis will not look at the Labour Minority Government of Ramsay MacDonald that held office between 1923 and 1924: There are a number of reasons for this, which will be explained below. Firstly, this thesis sets out to explore the debates around the threat of Bolshevism and the factions that this established within the Conservative Party and Coalition. These factions were made up of largely Tory Cabinet members and represent a Conservative fear of change at the time, both in terms of the rise of Socialism and Bolshevism, but also in terms of the changes occurring within international relations, the balance of power in Europe, and the fall of previous great nations and empires as a result. This thesis is therefore largely focused on the Conservative Party, though its role in Coalition means that for the purposes of a full study, these years and the influence of the Liberals cannot be ruled out; the same cannot be said of the Labour Party. The threat of Bolshevism elicited a strong response in the Conservative Party, and to some extent among the Liberals, and divided opinion in terms of reaction in a consistent way in both of these forms of government over the period. The Labour Party, however, is a separate entity in this; it was never in power with the Tories during this period and so no continuity exists here. Labour also viewed Bolshevism from an entirely different perspective (being largely supportive), while its leaders had no similar splits on the issue as their discussions on Bolshevism and Russia revolved around an entirely different axis. While Bolshevism is of course a major theme during the MacDonald Government, which this thesis will touch upon from a Conservative perspective, it is an issue

that impacts them in a different way entirely. Some of the reasons for a difference in approach to the Labour Party are: a perception of their closeness with Bolshevism, Conservative propaganda linking Labour with more extreme ideas, the impact of incidents like the Campbell Case and Zinoviev letter, the very different political approach of Labour MPs and members. There are for example no real debates on how to mitigate Bolshevik threat and sees no similar factions emerge.

The last question that the reader may ask is why this thesis intends to focus on the British Cabinet and the debates and factions that occurred there and not, for example, the wider debates within Parliament and among backbenchers, or even among local parties and members. This thesis in no way implies that these debates were not ongoing throughout the many strata that make up a party and politics more generally. Nor is it stating that factions did not emerge there – perhaps even mirroring those that will described here. However, it does in part acknowledge the importance and significance of the Cabinet in terms of policy creation and also points out the constraints in terms of time, resources and length of a thesis such as this; hopefully these areas can be explored in greater detail in time.

With these real constraints in mind, it is therefore important to establish just why the Cabinet was selected as the focus of this study. Much has been written on the importance of Cabinet and its prominence within the Party and Government apparatus in terms of policy-making. As a great number of academics have pointed out, it is to Westminster that all persons of political consequence gravitate in Britain. The impact of events that occur across the nation and globe only become matters that impact British Policy when discussed in London, whether that be informal discussion in London Clubs, appraisal by the British Press, examination in Whitehall, debate in Parliament or, the most key of these, examination in Cabinet.[7] As Inbal Rose states, "The centrality of London stems from prerogative of government, for it alone possesses control over the mechanisms and wherewithal necessary to implement policy."[8] In terms of the structure of the Conservative Party and its traditional decision-making process, we also see that, while the party leader is dominant, he or she not only asks the advice of Cabinet but traditionally assumes their participation in policy formulation.

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[7] Keith Berriedale, and Norman Gibbs, *The British Cabinet system*, London, 1952; Martin Burch and Jan Holiday's, *The British Cabinet System*, London, 1995; Christopher Hill, *Cabinet Decisions on Foreign Policy: The British Experience, October 1938-June 1941*, Cambridge, 1991; Simon James, *British Cabinet Government*, 2nd edition, Abington, 1999

[8] Inbal Rose, *Conservationism and Foreign Policy during the Lloyd George Coalition 1918-1922*, London 1999, p.10

The belief in Cabinet power and the control of collective responsibility encourages this practice.[9]

The reason that this thesis focuses on Cabinet can in part also be explained by the weakness of other levels of the party in the policy-making process at this point in time and within the constrictions of a Coalition Government in the first period explored at least. Until 1922, the Parliamentary Party was almost completely devoid of formal parliamentary infrastructure. There were no established channels between leadership and MPs.[10] The only power that backbenchers really had was their vote and ability to join together to put pressure on the Cabinet. The constituencies played an even smaller role in the formation of policy. Local Conservative associations did not discuss policy in any formal sense, nor did they want or intend to.[11] As Rose states, the examination of character, development and formation of Conservative, or in this case Coalition, policy must in this period focus on the Party leadership and Cabinet.

The Cabinet and factions over Bolshevism

The ten years that this thesis covers saw three different Liberal and Conservative leaders and a number of different Cabinet combinations (See Appendix 1.) From the revolution occurring in Russia in 1917, lasting the duration of the First World War and ending in January 1919, the country was run by a smaller War Cabinet – a group consisting of Lloyd George and four other members – though meetings were often attended by other Cabinet-level members of government. The figures officially in this Cabinet aside from the Prime Minister were Lord Curzon, Bonar Law, Lord Milner and Arthur Henderson; Austen Chamberlain replaced Milner in April 1918. This smaller form of Cabinet was created for the purpose of running the war, giving the Prime Minister a small sounding board of trusted colleagues with whom he could confer, yet ensuring that debates were not so large as to stop decisive decision-making occurring.[12] For the purpose of clarity, this thesis will refer to this group as the Cabinet and will analyse their positioning on the issue of Bolshevism in the same manner as that of the later, larger Cabinets, though Henderson will not be included in the factions that this thesis examines. From January 1919 until October 1922, Lloyd George returned to a

9 Rose, *Conservatism and Foreign Policy*, p. 35: Ramsden, *The Organisation of the Conservative and Unionist Party in Britain 1910-1930*, Oxford, 1974, p. 68 (his unpublished thesis and not a book) and J. Mackintosh, *The British Cabinet*, London, 1968, p. 394

10 Rose, *Conservatism and Foreign Policy* intro xii: Norton and Aughey, *Conservatives and Conservatism*, pp. 193-4

11 Rose, *Conservatism and Foreign Policy* and Mckenzie, *British Political Parties*, p.244

12 Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity*

larger Peacetime Cabinet. Between then and May 1923, we see Bonar Law's Cabinet and then Baldwin forms two Cabinets (May 1923 to January 1924 and then from November 1924 until the end of this thesis' period).[13]

It is the splits within these Cabinets over the issue of Bolshevism that this thesis will focus on, examining when and over which events these occurred, what the splits in the Cabinet were, who the key figures in each faction were, and what influence these groups and debates had on the eventual action taken and formulation of policy. To understand these splits, one must analyse and categorise the factions that formed as a result. I believe that three distinct camps arise within the Lloyd George Government over this issue and remain in place until the breaking-off of relations with Russia in 1927. The members of these factions change at times: this was inevitable as members of Cabinet were replaced, retired and died over the course of the decade; however, the focus of the factions did not change. The key figures of these groups also changed over time, with a few exceptions, yet this was largely down to political circumstance rather than any change in the strength of feeling held on either sides with regards to the threat of Bolshevism and how to approach it. Within these groupings, as in most political factions, there was of course an array of views and opinions – though the overarching way in which they believed the problem should have been approached was of course similar to their colleagues within the same faction. Before these factions are named and described, it is important to note that, while some active Cabinet members changed between the factions depending on the issue and arguments made, there was a core contingent of who were immovable and staunch in their beliefs that their approach to domestic unrest, Russia and the threat of Bolshevism was the correct one.

There was also a group within all the relevant Cabinets that remained silent on the issue, sometimes not involving themselves at all in the debates around Bolshevism, and often silently supporting the Prime Minister. These men will be included as a group and discussed in more detail later. Lastly, it is relevant to raise the relative prominence of Conservatives as opposed to Liberals (with the exception of Churchill, if only until 1924 when he returned to the Tories), in these debates, even during the Coalition period. I would like to suggest why this may be. Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, this could be explained by the small

[13] R. Blake, *The Conservative party from Peel to Churchill*, *London*, 1972; John Chamley, *A History of Conservative Politics since 1830*, London, 2008

number of Liberal MPs in Parliament at the time compared to Unionists in the Coalition after the 1918 election. The nature of Lloyd Georges Coalition and his role as Prime Minister also meant that it was necessary for high-profile Tories to be included among the major positions and thus have a more prominent role in these debates. Lastly, and citing perhaps the most anecdotal reason, the obsession with Bolshevism and Socialism, the events in Russia, unrest at home and a belief in military force and protection of empire and institution, were all perhaps more common in the Conservative party at the time – ensuring the debates around this issue were well populated by that specific party.

Hardliners

This thesis will attempt to show that a core group of anti-Bolsheviks, who believed in tough measures against potential Bolshevism at home and action against it abroad, did exist in the Cabinet throughout the period in question. For the purpose of analysis, I have elected to describe this group as the 'Hardliners', and I believe that this name is a good representation of the approach that they advocated, especially when dealing with domestic unrest. The influences of these men will be explored later in this thesis. The key members of this group vary throughout the decade but Winston Churchill was a constant (when in Cabinet) and is easily placed in the position of group ringleader and figurehead for the faction. As well as Churchill, the other key figures in the Lloyd George period were Lord Curzon and to some extent Lord Birkenhead; Lord Milner and Lord Balfour were also Hardliners, though they were less zealous than others and could be convinced to not oppose policy (even if they did not agree with it) through strength of argument and political/economic reality. Field Marshall Wilson was also a constant and key Hardliner in the Cabinet, siding with Churchill in every key debate on the topic. It must be noted that though present in Cabinet meetings, he was not officially a member and held the role of Chief of Imperial General Staff; however, despite this, due to his prominence in the Cabinet debates and role as an influencer, Wilson is included within this thesis. Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, throughout this period and under Baldwin, was also a supporter of the Hardliners, backing them in key debates around the miners' strike in 1921 and the aftermath of the General Strike. Secretary of State for Scotland Robert Munro was not involved in the majority of debates and yet, when called into action against the Clyde unrest, sided with Churchill for troops to be used and aligned himself entirely with the Hardliners in the Cabinet. Sir Eric Geddes, the Tory President of the Board of Trade from

May 1919, was vocal in his support of the Hardliners. He believed that battalions of loyal militia should be formed, made up of any patriotic members of society, in preparation for class war.[14] Geddes would play a role in hastening the railway strike in September 1919 by alienating the union leader J.H Thomas. By March 1920, he was gone.

Debates on this issue did not play a large part in Bonar Law's short period in power, though the factions remained largely the same at the time. In the Baldwin period, the 'Hardliners' were without question an even stronger faction within the Cabinet and played a large role in the major debates surrounding strikes, the General Strike itself and the later breaking-off of relations with Russia. There are differences between the 1923 and 1924 Cabinets but in terms of the whole period, Churchill was again the key figure, as was Curzon until his death in 1925. Birkenhead, compared to under Lloyd George, also became a staunch member of the faction, while William Joynson-Hicks (who would become Home Secretary) was also an important hard-line figure. Though not as prominent as the others, William Clive Bridgeman and Sir Douglas Hogg were also aligned to the Hardliners, though they were largely silent in the majority of debates between the groups. Edward Wood (later Lord Irwin and Earl of Halifax) was also more sympathetic to the Hardliners, though his position as Viceroy of India meant that he did not play a large role.[15] Despite the relatively small number of Hardliners, the influence, position and passion of Churchill, Joynson-Hicks (Jix) and Birkenhead cannot be underestimated in terms of their influence on Cabinet. A last factor, and also highly important when understanding how the Hardliners were able to operate and influence the events, is the level of support that their views on Bolshevism and domestic unrest received among the Conservative Party backbenchers and the Party membership itself. During the precarious politics of the Lloyd George Coalition in particular, this support greatly added to the weight of these Hardliners' words in Cabinet debates.

Moderates/Pragmatists

The second and opposing faction in these Cabinet debates was the group who argued against the extreme policies of the Hardliners and whom I have described as the Moderates, and occasionally the Pragmatists.

[14] Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, 1. p.101
[15] Referred to as Lord Irwin, Lord Halifax and by his given name Edward Wood.

This group formed the opposition to the Hardliners and, perhaps tellingly, were led by the two key (thesis-relevant) Prime Ministers of the period, Lloyd George and Stanley Baldwin. As with the other factions, the influences of the Moderates will be looked at in detail later in this thesis; however, a number of points are important to make at this juncture. There is no question that these men were supportive or sympathetic to the ideology of Bolshevism or the aims that its practitioners at home and abroad held; indeed, it must be assumed that these men were in fact anti-Bolshevik, and disgusted, fearful and angry at what this new ideology represented. The key point to their positioning as the moderate group in Cabinet is their belief that domestic unrest was not due to Bolshevism but instead a myriad of social-political reasons, and that the best response to it was not draconian measures but the addressing of the issues it arose from and negotiation and discussion to prevent more radical elements on the left gaining influence. Internationally, they were as concerned with the rise of Bolshevism in Russia and Europe as their hardline colleagues; however, they saw the merit in continuing trade that was beneficial to Britain and Empire; saw the pitfalls of any form of military intervention or aggressive foreign policy; and also understood the realities of Britain's post-war economic status as well as the mood of the war-weary nation.

During the Coalition period, the key figure for the moderates was the Prime Minister himself, Lloyd George. His sympathy for the factors that influenced much of the unrest in the country and belief that a patriotic working class who sacrificed so much in the war must be reasoned with and not attacked was key to his approach. He was also acutely aware of the economic situation that the nation was in and the need to ensure that the Unions help would become part of the solution, ensuring industry continued to run, extremist elements were marginalised, and workers grievances were addressed to help the country return to prosperity. It was a similar understanding that led to his rejection of any interventionist schemes in Russia and even his opposition to support the Whites in the Civil War there. Britain, he believed, was tired of war; the people would not stand for more such schemes and the cost of defeating Germany had been so great that the nation could not afford to go to war once again. Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain and Horne were the PM’s most loyal Cabinet supporters from the Tories, with Chamberlain playing a leading role in debates. Addison, Fisher and Montagu, all Liberals, were also broadly in line with their leader throughout. All believed Lloyd George that wars, ideological grudges and isolation of Russia would all dislocate trade and industrial stability

– and that this was key for rebuilding Britain.[16] Sir Robert Horne at the Department for Labour was a moderate, recognising that genuine social hardship largely stimulated Labour's demands and believed in curbing prices and rents. He argued against the Hardliners and believed that the government should not rely on force but on "the moral supremacy of the community". He was, however, largely quiet during Cabinet debates, remaining a silent supporter.[17] Walter Long was also a member of the silent group in Cabinet during the period, but was when pushed a moderate, stating in Feb 1919 that: "Trade Union organisation was the only thing between us and anarchy".[18] A minor member of the group was Herbert Fisher. His role at within education meant that he played little part in the debates, but when the issue arose he was undoubtedly a moderate and a supporter of the Prime Minister's approach.

During Stanley Baldwin's time as Prime Minister he, like Lloyd George, was a key figure for the moderates and his political views and approach to class conflict was vital in pushing back against the very strong group of Hardliners within his Cabinet. In this, he was joined by Austen Chamberlain, who was his Foreign Secretary, as well as his younger brother, Neville Chamberlain. This group was joined by Arthur Steel-Maitland as strong supporters of the Prime Minister. Sir George Cave, the former Home Secretary and now High Chancellor, was also a moderate, though his lack of input in the vast majority of the debates in Cabinet could possibly lead to his placement in the silent section described below.

The silent section

Given the strength of feeling shown by both leading moderates and diehards alike, and the personal involvement of both Lloyd George and Baldwin, perhaps the large number of Cabinet members who remained silent during the various recorded clashes within Cabinet is one of the most surprising aspects of this period. It must be assumed that the silent group were not uninterested in the matter, nor were they not concerned about the unrest in the nation and the challenges that Bolshevism represented abroad, as for men of such high office this would appear like hubris. Therefore, instead it is likely that given the position of the Prime Minister in both cases that these men were silent tacit supporters of the moderate group – or at least of

[16] Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity,* p. 115
[17] Lloyd George Papers, LG to Law, 29 Jan 1919, F/30/3/10
[18] Cabinet Conclusions, 4 February 1919, CAB 23/9/12

the views of the Prime Minister. The roles they held in the Cabinet may well have had little to do with these matters and thus they were willing to not involve themselves in the debate and instead support the approach of their leader. They may also have been more animated in private, making decisions on the matter where historians can no longer delve – though this is certainly not clear in the published or archival sources that refer to them.

During the Coalition, the figures most notable for this approach were Walter Hume Long, whose only involvement was when he feared strikes among sailors. Edward Shortt was another who was silent for the majority of debates – something extremely surprising when his role as Home Secretary is taken into account. His main involvement came soon after his rise to the role and involved the Police Strikes; here he was sympathetic to the concerns of the men and backed the Prime Minister's assessment. Other men who held roles of some relevance – Lord Inverforth, Albert Stanley, Christopher Addison and Rowland Prothero – were all silent in the debates analysed for this thesis. The same kind of pattern emerges under Baldwin: a core of both factions and a largely silent group. Given the wealth of information available in his diaries, Leo Amery is a leading example of this. He speaks often about the views of his colleagues on the issue of Bolshevism, the threat of Russia and the unrest ongoing in the nation, and yet his own view is unclear and his involvement in Cabinet debates close to nil. Robert Cecil is another such man, though we do see slightly more of him than of Amery. Largely absent from debate but occasionally entering it, he was by and large supportive of government on the domestic strikes but not always. However, on Versailles and Russian diplomacy, he would state: "I am profoundly convinced that there has never been a less satisfactory directory of our foreign policy in this country".[19] However, his sympathy for the working man and the issues they faced would see him avoid joining the Hardliners within Cabinet on matters of domestic policy.[20] Lord Salisbury, Sir Phillip Cunliffe-Lister, Lord Percy and Lord Peel were all largely inactive in these debates.

Diehards and Hardliners

It is worth clarifying that the Hardliners that this thesis describes are a separate entity from other factions at

[19] Cecil Papers, Cecil to Mrs Fawcett, 31 May 1922, MS. 51163, ff, 97-9
[20] Birmingham Library, Austen Chamberlain Papers, Cecil to Chamberlain, 20th and 27th April 1921, AC 24/3/15 and 17

the time, most importantly from the Diehards. There is certainly some overlap in the views of both groups and in their membership; however, this is unsurprising and the differences in approach, leadership and focus distinguish the two. Membership of the Diehards revolved around a number of key themes: protectionism, a strong imperial policy, the continuation of British rule in India, a reduction in spending and taxation, restoration of the House of Lords and opposition to Socialism. The issue of Ireland and India were also major themes for both groups and a large factor in their membership.[21] They represented anti-Bolshevik feeling too: as Ball notes, "the diehards' unremitting hostility to Bolshevik Russia incorporated an uncritical acceptance of anti-Soviet propaganda; they objected to Lloyd George's attempt at detente in 1920-22 and welcomed the breach of relations in 1927".[22] This, however, was not their primary motivation and was not a major factor in the formation of their grouping; note that by "welcoming" the breach, we see the primary difference between themselves and the Hardliners: the latter were influencing and debating policy in Cabinet while the majority of the diehards sat outside this inner circle. Loosely led by Salisbury, Gretton, Croft and Carson, the inter-war Diehards had a narrow and temporally limited remit, designed to win over other back-benchers and not demarcate ideological boundaries.[23] They had formed as a result of Conservative concerns around the nature of the Coalition and the apparent loss of traditional Conservative Policy. This set them apart from the Cabinet Hardliners, whose focus was purely on the issue of Russia and included among their ranks Liberals and Conservatives. There is of course some overlap in the membership of the two groups, and given the side of the party both were likely to appeal to, this is unsurprising. Joynson-Hicks is a good example of this form of dual membership. There was also an overlap regarding the issue of Bolshevism and Europe, though for the Diehards this seems an issue of less importance than others, whereas it was the main focus of the Hardliner group.

But the most important and distinctive difference was perhaps where the groups operated and how they attempted to push forward their ideas. The Diehards' focus on the backbenches, press and pushing public and political opinion meant that they operated differently than the Hardliners, who were a Cabinet faction influencing policy at the highest level and during its formation. As Stuart Ball describes, "The Diehards

[21] Stuart Ball, *Portrait of a Party: The Conservative Party in Britain 1918-1945*, Oxford, 2013, p. 345; R. Blake, *The Conservative party from Peel to Churchill*, London, 1972; John Ramsden, *An Appetite for Power, A New History of the Conservative Party*, London, 1998; John Chamley, *A 'History of Conservative Politics since 1830*, London, 2008

[22] Ball, *Portrait of a Party*, p. 345

[23] N.C. Fleming, Diehard Conservatism, Mass Democracy, and Indian Constitutional Reform, c.1918–35, *Parliamentary History*, Volume 32, (2013), 337-360

alone could not overthrow the Party leader, or dictate his policy. It was only if events should confirm their constant complaints, or if their outlook on any major issue should come to be widely shared within the parliamentary Party, that a crisis would emerge".[24] The Hardliners were a very different entity – they were not a Parliamentary group seeking membership and holding large meetings; instead, they were a small and Cabinet-based grouping based on the ongoing debates around Russia and how to react to the threat of Bolshevism domestically. They did have backbench support and used this as a strength; however, this was not the purpose of their existence and not their greatest asset – which was the existence of the factions within Cabinet, its role at the highest level of debate around policy, and its ability to actually create policy and enact it.

Influences on faction membership

We must understand which factors may have influenced those in both the Hardliner and Moderate groups within the Cabinet. To this end, a series of case studies can be found in Appendix II, which detail the backgrounds, political and social views, political influences and other factors that may have contributed to the stance that individuals took. These case studies look at Churchill, Lloyd George, Baldwin, Curzon, Birkenhead, Austen and Neville Chamberlain, Milner and Balfour, thus offering a selection of Moderates, Hardliners and those in the middle. It seemed unnecessary to include any members of the silent group for these studies as their lack of input in the debates makes analysing their influences much more subjective and open to wider interpretation.

There is a pattern of factors that can be broadly described here. The moderates are perhaps the more understandable faction to categorise and are largely influenced by pragmatic and political reasoning than the more emotive Hardliners. As has been discussed, these men were not pro-Bolshevik, sympathisers or even dismissive of the threat that this ideology could represent; they were, however, much more practical in how they believed the government should respond. The financial realities that Great Britain was facing after four years of war loomed large in their thoughts, and this, alongside their awareness of the public's war weariness

[24] Stuart Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party: The Crisis of 1929-31*, 1988, p. 23 ; see also Phillip Williamson, *National Crisis and National Government: British Politics, the Economy and Empire, 1926-1932*, 2003, p. 177.

and mood, was a major factor in their opposition to intervention or any action against Bolshevism in Russia.[25] They were often men with sympathy for the conditions that the working class lived in and perhaps therefore understood that domestic unrest was less likely to be about grand political and revolutionary ideals and instead about improving living and working conditions. There is no question that they believed in the fundamental tenants of Conservativism, however they were more aware of the socio-economic factors that lay behind the domestic unrest and divides. While undoubtedly having commitments to the institutions and ideas of Imperialism their view on Empire was also perhaps more pragmatic, understanding that as at home certain compromises could be made to ensure extremism and revolution was unable to gain a foothold. The position of Lloyd George and Baldwin as leading moderates can also not be underestimated, with career-minded waverers perhaps more likely to pick a side and argue for the views of their party leader.

The Hardliners were largely conservative, though Churchill until 1924 was a key exception, and were almost to a man traditional conservatives with a passionate belief in Empire, British foreign policy responsibility and the traditional structure of society. Many saw a policy of intervention as a continuation of the tenet of British Foreign Policy; especially – in Churchill's case as a descendant of Marlborough – that armed intervention was necessary in Europe to address the balance of powers and maintain the status quo.[26] On empire, they were aware of the fragile bonds holding the British Empire together and of those forces that sought to weaken and destroy it, of which Bolshevism was one. Curzon and Churchill were among those in the group with aristocratic backgrounds, which perhaps made the actions of the Bolsheviks in Russia more personal than to others. As believers in traditional institutions, they were deeply upset by the upheaval of the regime, church, civil service, military, aristocracy and monarchy that Bolshevism represented. All conflated Socialism with Bolshevism and were openly fearful and angry at the rise of these new ideologies, perhaps due to the break with the traditional class structures that they themselves seemed to represent. Churchill, for example, declared that he could understand civil reform, provided it was a government-led affair. He could not, however, stand by and allow demands from below to threaten the social order he believed in as necessary for society.[27]

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[25] R. Blake, *The Conservative party from Peel to Churchill*, London, 1972;
[26] Rose, *Churchill*, 148
[27] Rose, *Churchill*, 79

Lastly, some were more likely to be wary of the coalition than the moderates. This must not be overstated however, Birkenhead, Balfour and Worthington-Evans all were supporters, and Curzon only showed his true displeasure at the last moment. Despite this there was certainly a fear on the right of the Conservative Party that merging the two parties meant that they may lose their ideological identity. Perhaps it was in reaction to this that such a strong group formed such an uncompromising view on the issue of Russian Bolshevism – to try and safeguard against being swallowed up by Lloyd George and his politics.[28] Perhaps also the fear of being overwhelmed by Liberal Foreign Policy meant a reversion back to more traditional conservative principles and approach. Moreover, the pre-war years had ingrained a deep suspicion of any Liberal foreign policy, especially against aggressors such as Russian Bolsheviks.[29] They felt that Lloyd George's erratic view on Germany, his up-and-down relationship with France and his dangerous approach to Russia all proved this. For Hardliners on Bolshevism, there was a view that keeping Lloyd George in check and protecting Britain and Conservative values were one and the same. Perhaps this too in part explains the Conservative grouping on Bolshevism and the lack of compromise or willingness to back down over the issue that we see throughout his time as Prime Minister.

The gap to fill

As detailed in the literature review presented in the next section, we have a wealth of sources discussing the international events of the age, focusing on the leaders of nations and key decisions. However, these do not offer any detail on how the fear of Bolshevism affected the Cabinet, and the Conservative Party, creating splits and debates that would rock the government in 1917 and ten years thereafter. In reality, the impact of, and threat posed by, Bolshevism cannot be underestimated and helps to explain many of the domestic and foreign policy decisions made, as well as the political splits that occurred in the years after the First World War. A great deal of work exists on the decisions, debates and policy of the British Government during the two great conflicts that sandwich this period, with the majority of sources on the key figures and the parties themselves focusing on their roles during the First and Second World War. However, even within the interwar period itself, we see major trends in the available research. The interwar period has become

[28] Rose, *Conservationism and Foreign Policy* p. 258
[29] Rose, *Conservationism and Foreign Policy*, p. 259

synonymous with a series of other key political events, not least appeasement, European extremism, domestic Fascism, Irish Home Rule and wider decolonisation. A great deal of literature is also available on the Empire and its gradual decline over the period.[30]

Regarding Churchill, the focus is often on his role as a great war leader, and alternatively on his less-than-glorious record in the First World War. Research on Lloyd George, too, often focuses on his time as a war leader, with the majority of literature on his domestic political career focusing on his clashes with Asquith, the fate of the Liberal Party and the rise of Labour. Neville Chamberlain, Stanley Baldwin and Churchill have all have generated a great deal of research on their views on appeasement, for example, with Chamberlain now synonymous with it. The histories available of the Conservative Party itself also focus on the other major debates of the age: economically the issues of empire free trade and the gold standard are both heavily represented, as are the leadership battle between Baldwin and Curzon, the issue of appeasement, Irish Home rule and the Empire. With these key events dominating the research and literature on the period, it is perhaps unsurprising that the issue of Bolshevism has been under-represented. There is literature available on the rise of militancy among the British working class and the threat of Bolshevism and revolution to Britain; however, this is often from a left-wing perspective and does not devote much time or space to the internal splits on-going within the Cabinet over the issue. On the matter of Russian intervention, the majority of the literature looks at the British deployment from a military perspective, the reaction in Britain where the ripples of this conflict were most clearly felt among the militant left and Labour Party, and here, too, we have good research available. There is a good deal of writing available on the Clydeside strikes and the men who led them, and this offers an avenue for research into the government's reaction to this crisis but not within the context of the whole period. The same goes for the soldiers' strikes, police strikes and even the 'Hands Off Russia' movement. Perhaps the most obvious example of this lack of attention to Bolshevism and how the Cabinet split over the threat comes with the General Strike. A vast amount of literature exists on the strike itself, and these books review events from a range of viewpoints – most often an overview of the Strike with attention firmly on the actions of the strikers, police and the scenes witnessed by those out on the streets. There is also plenty of writing on the Strike as viewed from the Trade Union movement, with good

[30] See for example: A. Clayton, *The British Empire as a Superpower, 1919- 1939*, London, 1986; L.J. Butler, *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post Imperial World, London*, 2002; Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918 – 1922*, Manchester, 1984

detail offered on the internal debates within these movements. Although a number of histories of the Conservative Party do have chapters on these events, there is no study purely on the reaction of the Cabinet and the internal conflict that was on-going there in the build-up and duration of the event.

It is this gap in the literature that this thesis seeks to fill, offering a detailed look at the internal splits that were occurring in the Lloyd George and Conservative Cabinet over Bolshevism. My research therefore looks in detail at each of the major flashpoints from 1917 to 1927, giving an overview of each situation and analysing the debate at the heart of government over each. It will argue that due to the debates around Bolshevism at Cabinet level, a number of factions emerged: Hardliners, moderates and a third silent grouping. My research will explore how these groups were represented, the key events that they clashed on, and the impact that this had on Cabinet decision-making. It will then explore how the debates held on the issue led to policy formation and moulded the governments' reaction to the Bolshevik threat over the period.

The scene is set

Before providing full analyses of the impact that these factions had on Britain's policy towards domestic and international Bolshevism in this period, some further context is needed. The rise of Bolshevism in Russia and across Europe signalled a new threat for Britain – one that seemed even more real given the unrest and changes ongoing throughout the British class system and within the working classes over the last years of war. The knowledge that men with the same political fervour and ideologies existed in the industrial cities of the North and Scotland and within the army itself made such concerns even greater. The depth of feeling on this and on the other issues soon to be discussed, the fear of its spread to Britain, and the uncertainty of how best to counter it, is one clear explanation for the surprising level of Cabinet focus and disagreement on the subject. Indeed, in Britain, years of war had exacerbated existing problems, while a militarised and politicised working class meant that they were now potentially much greater. Poverty was rife throughout the industrialised areas of the nation, and slum housing and bad working conditions remained the norm for many. It was far from the "land fit for heroes" to which many believed they would be returning from France. Indeed, the fact that so many men had been to war also led to the fear of barbarisation among the working class: would a new combat-ready, emotionally hardened and psychologically strained working class be likely

to be content with so little material comfort and so much unfairness? The fear of this new, uncivilised and violent world dominated British political life, adding to the climate of uncertainty and leading many within the coalition to see themselves as protectors of the nation; this was certainly a factor in the decision-making on both sides of the Cabinet with the Hardliners believing that a firm hand was needed to steady the ship, while the moderates argued that compromise and help would end the threat of Bolshevism.

As well as this, big changes in politics led to fear and uncertainty for many in the government, not least the Representation of the People Act in 1918 that brought millions of working-class men and women into the franchise. It was a move linked to the sacrifices of war and to the issues already discussed: the anger at the conditions for many working-class soldiers; the erosion of class as the only issue of importance in such decisions; and a fear of the alternatives. As Home Secretary George Cave stated: "War ... has made it, I think, impossible that ever again... there should be a revival of the old class feeling which was responsible for so much, and, among other things, for the exclusion for a period, of so many of our population from the class of electors".[31] Indeed, it had made it impossible for the status quo to be maintained, but these changes were not without risk. New political forces lurked on the edges of British politics. The Labour Party, of course, was Socialist but not unknown; however, more extreme left-wing groups were also hopeful of attracting at least some of the millions of new voters. Indeed, as stated, it was not just the financial system that Conservatives feared might be coming to an end. Ever self-aware, Britain, from the Victorian era, had been readying itself for loss or calamity to occur in its Empire. Indeed, even Rome had fallen; the same fate at the hands of barbarians would surely one day threaten Britain. The Bolsheviks, to many, seemed like the Huns of the modern world.[32] As Toybnee later described in a radio interview: "In our generation, we are conscious of being swept away on a stream of dizzily rapid change... and if, instead, the current is going to carry us over a precipice, then we are convinced that our precipice is anyhow going to be the greatest fall of man there has ever been – a very Niagara… The crash of modern civilisation!"[33]

These views, these fears, are important to this thesis. Politicians were not immune; indeed, many would have been aware of the literature describing such possibilities. It was a fear that can be seen to drive some in the

[31] House of Commons Debate, 22 May 1917, Vol 93, Col 2135
[32] Overy, *The Morbid Age; Wells, The Salvaging of Civilisation*
[33] Bodleian Library, Toynbee Papers, draft BBC talk, 'Whither Mankind', no. 6, 26 march 1931, p. 2 – taken from Overy, A Morbid Age, 2009

Cabinet, especially Curzon, who saw Bolshevism as a threat to all, but also particularly to British interests in Asia and India. Churchill too, a great defender of Empire, watched with deep concern at the spreading whispers of these new ideologies approaching the unrepresented masses of the sub-continent. It was another dimension of the age that would impact these Cabinet debates on Bolshevism, making them more important than ever, and making them much harder for the moderate forces of government to silence. The debate on Bolshevism would largely take place behind the closed doors of the Cabinet room, but all of these factors were in play – one reason it came to split the Cabinet repeatedly over the next ten years and was too big and too personal an issue to allow the Prime Minister to effectively shut down debate on it. As we have seen, the issue was, however, more complicated still: the very institutions and traditions that played so large a role in the nation's constitutional government looked broken and damaged. Society, too, had changed, with a new urbanised and politicised working class emerging from the conflict. It seemed to many in government that civilised British values no longer prevailed, the rules of the political game had changed, and four years of war had destroyed one of the establishment's most cherished illusions - that organized labour could be harnessed (and, in the case of Tory politicians, harnessed to Conservative ends).[34] With millions of new voters, class politics had arrived and it was still far from clear to Lloyd George or the Cabinet whether the Labour Party would be willing to settle into parliamentary politics, if the people would accept that as the voice of the left, or instead if more radical change was on its way.

[34] David Jarvis, ‘British Conservatism and Class Politics in the 1920s’, *The English Historical Review*, 440 (1996), 59-84

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Key literature

This thesis is exploring the Cabinet factions that emerged as a result of the debates around the threat of internal and external Bolshevism between 1917 and 1927. There is a huge amount of literature available that is of relevance to this topic, and I will include in this literature review the books that were key in terms of my understanding of the topic. However, despite this wealth of secondary sources, there has been no research devoted to the specific question I am asking; no research currently looks in any detail at the Cabinet splits during this period on this issue of Bolshevism and no research has been undertaken that looks at the emergence of factions in Cabinet that lasted (albeit with changes) for this ten-year period. For the purpose of describing the literature currently available, where the gaps exist that this thesis hopes in part to fill and how current secondary sources helped my understanding of the period, I will analyse the key literature in each area of relevance to this thesis.

There are no extant studies looking at the topic of this thesis in its entirety; however, Stephen White's 1979 publication *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Study in the Politics of Diplomacy, 1920-1924* is the closest there is to a previous study on the topic.[35] This is a detailed and useful book and greatly aids our understanding of the way in which the two states interacted during this period, with White describing in detail the continuity of foreign policy and the ways in which Soviet Russia attempted to influence the workers of nations such as Britain. He argues that Britain saw the potential trade agreement as a diplomatic tool which could be used to influence and position Russia – a view that given the depth of Conservative reaction and Lloyd George's silence in articulating such a plan is difficult to support in its entirety. The timeframe analysed is much shorter than that adopted in this thesis. Despite the title, this book begins in earnest with the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement in 1921 and does not focus for long at all on the Revolution itself or Intervention. It concludes in 1924 with the diplomatic recognising of Russia by Britain. While it does discuss in part the views of the Cabinet, his research does not examine the process of policy creation or the factions that sway it, nor does it look at the domestic factors, focusing instead on Lloyd George's

[35] Stephen White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution: A Study in the Politics of Diplomacy, 1920-1924*, New York, 1979

reasoning and attempts to conclude trade agreements with Russia and the economic reasoning that drove this. His conclusion suggests that those Conservatives with fortunes based on agriculture and Empire were those most likely to be anti-Russian recognition or trade, whilst industrialists due to their capitalist outlook were more likely to see the benefits of a relationship. One can understand the merits of this argument and perhaps it played a small part in the decisions of the men in Cabinet; however, as he himself points out, this is no simple division, as men such as Curzon had large investments in business and Empire, as did Birkenhead. It may indeed play a part for some, but if so it was just one factor out of many.

Another work that is relatively closely linked to the focus of this thesis is Keith Neilson's *Britain, Soviet Russia, and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, 1919-1939*.[36] Though largely focused on foreign policy, Neilson closely examines the internal dynamics of the British government and explains how foreign policy decisions are formulated and resolved, including a look at the internal dynamics of Cabinet in this process. However, while the title implies that the research will be an overview of the whole period, it is in fact very 1930s-heavy, with the main analysis of Soviet Russia and Britain focusing on the period from 1933 until 1939 and largely exploring the impact that this relationship would have in terms of the Second World War. Neilson's analyses of Britain's relationship with the other nations of the period is also within this timeframe, with the main thrust of his argument surrounding the appeasement debate and the factors internal and external that led to the Munich Agreement and the failure to build an agreement with Russia and the subsequent Nazi-Soviet Pact. While he does look briefly at the Cabinet and its impact on policy-making, his focus is much more on the departments and individuals within them and the way in which they were able to influence and change the foreign policy focus on Britain. Similarly, William Coates' *A History of Anglo-Soviet Relations* is useful in terms of the debate around international diplomacy with Russia but offers very little on Cabinet splits or opinion. Louise Shaw's A*ttitudes of the British Political Elite Towards the Soviet Union* again is sadly not as described in the title and instead is a look at how British decision makers in the 1930s thwarted attempts at an Anglo-Soviet Alliance.[37] Also important is Gabriel Gorodetsky's *The Precarious Truce*, this looks at Anglo-Soviet relations from 1924 until 1927 and specifically at the British Governments response to various Russian actions and overtures, however its focus is on the Russian side and

[36] Keith Neilson, *Britain, Soviet Russia, and the Collapse of the Versailles Order, 1919-1939* ,Cambridge, 2009

[37] William Coates, *A History of Anglo-Soviet Relations*, London, 1943; Louise Grace Shaw, 'Attitudes of the British Political Elite Towards the Soviet Union', D&S, 13, No. 1 (2002), 55-74

its key argument that the Russians were attempting to largely overt a open breach and that revolution was not a main aim (instead seeing Russian motives as based around the security of the Soviet Union) while interesting does not analyse the British Government reactions in as great a depth.[38]

Overviews of the period

In terms of the period as a whole and the many factors that influenced Cabinet decision making on the issue of Bolshevism, a number of books are helpful. Zara Steiner, in *The Lights that Failed*, and Mark Mazower's *Dark Continent* were key to my understanding of the international situation and how this influenced the debates surrounding Bolshevism and the threat of Bolshevik Russia to Great Britain and Empire.[39] Both look in detail at the spread of Bolshevik-inspired unrest, discuss intervention policy, and offer some perspective on the views of British decision makers around these areas – though in no real detail. Richard Overy, in *A Morbid Age*, looks into the sense of crisis and fear, 'a presentiment of impending disaster', and the prospect of the end of civilisation, that, in his view, characterised Britain between the wars. There is discussion of the threat of Bolshevism and the unrest that spread through the nation after the war; however, the perspective of his research is largely cultural and from a bottom-up perspective and offers no analysis of the political elite and decision-making processes around these new threats.[40] In terms of understanding the environment that caused such fear of Bolshevism and contributed to working-class unrest, Sidney Webb and H. G. Wells works from the time give a good description of the societal uncertainty and belief that capitalism was a decaying economic framework.[41] As Nick Lloyd and Jon Lawrence's research shows, there was also a fear that the Great War would change the working man in Britain forever. Given the economic hardships that these men suffered and the brutality that they had witnessed during their time in the trenches, many believed that they would be more militant, and therefore less likely to abide by the normal constraints of society. All of this was important in terms of the context of social unrest during this period and elites' fear of Bolshevik revolution.[42]

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[38] Gabriel Gorodetsky, *The Precarious Truce: Anglo-Soviet Relations 1924-1927*, Cambridge, 1977

[39] Zara Steiner, *The Lights that Failed: European International History 1919-1933*, Oxford, 2007; Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent, Europe's Twentieth Century*, London, 1998

[40] Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age.*

[41] Sidney Webb, *The Decay of Capitalist Civilisation*, London, 1923; H.G. Wells, *The Salvaging of Civilisation*, London, 1921

[42] Nick Lloyd, *Hundred Days, The End of the Great War,* Viking, London, 2013; Jon Lawrence, Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain, *Journal of Modern History*, 75, No. 3, (2003), 557-589

Ross McKibbin's *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-51,* while not looking at the political elite, Britain's relationship with Russia or the threat of Bolshevism, was an important source of knowledge on the changes in class and relationships within British society at the time. He discusses the radicalising effects of the First World War and the rise of a newly politicised and assertive working class and explores how much pressure was placed on both the fundamental belief structures of the nation and on the progress of democracy at the time. His research explains in part the anxiety and anger seen in the confrontations between classes that lasted throughout the interwar period, reinforcing the middle classes' sense of (anti-socialist) solidarity and perhaps the anti-Bolshevism of some as well. His more recent work, *Parties and People,* looks at the implications of opening up full voting rights and changes in national party politics. This focus is largely on the 1930s but does offer good analysis of the factors that thrust Baldwin into power and looks at the political advantages of his moderate approach.[43] Maurice Cowling's *The Impact of Labour 1920-1924* is another important work in the formulation of this thesis. A study of the 'high politics' of the period explores the actions and motivations of the key political figures and the impact of Labour on political calculation. Cowling explores the political crises of the period, some of which are relevant to my work. It is a fascinating insight to the period and an example of modern high politics, with an approach that in some ways this research also adheres to, placing the importance on the individual in decision making and highlighting the role that personal relationships, motivations and debates can have on the formulation of policy.[44] It is a book that has raised debate around the way history can be examined and though this thesis holds similarities in terms of its focus on the political elite; this is not to say that it is Cowlingite in its analysis. However, it certainly explores similar themes and approaches to the question of how the Cabinet, and individuals within it, were integral to policy formation on the threat of Bolshevism in this period. David Jarvis, who describes a Conservative Party wary of the newly militant working class and deeply concerned at what the new politics might mean, is also worth noting as an interesting analysis of the Conservative view on class politics. Although its focus is not on the issues or Cabinet developments that that this thesis explores, it does show how the Party adapted to achieve success and the impact of conservative messaging around the issue.[45]

On the parties

[43] Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-51*, Oxford, 1998; Ross McKibbin, *Parties and People: England 1914-51*, Oxford , 2010;
[44] M. Cowling, *The Impact of Labour 1920-1924: the beginning of modern British politics*, Cambridge, 1971
[45] David Jarvis, 'British Conservatism and Class Politics in the 1920s', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 111, No. 440 (1996), 59-84

In terms of the Lloyd George Coalition and Conservative Party itself, a number of key books must also be referenced as influences in the understanding of the Cabinet make-up and how such factions developed. Kenneth O. Morgan's *Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government* is one of these.[46] It is a key source of reference in terms of the coalition Cabinet and the pressures exerted upon it by both external left-wing militancy and internal right-wing members (which I believe included the Hardliners on Bolshevism). Morgan argues that the consensus created by the experience of war was still at risk from dissenting elements which remained outside, including the revolutionaries and militant shop-stewards. His analysis of the Conservatives willing to work with Lloyd George and their reasons for doing so helped to build up my profile of the moderate factions within Cabinet, while his analysis on a central approach to foreign policy can be expanded to refer to the middle-way approach I will describe as a result of the Cabinet debates around how to deal with Bolshevism. However, Morgan discusses a much wider politics than that of Cabinet and his arguments do not look in any real detail at the Cabinet splits regarding domestic Bolshevism, while his argument that the war helped abolish class politics seems stretched given the events described in this thesis lasting up until 1927. Inbal Rose's *Conservatism and Foreign Policy during the Lloyd George Coalition 1918-1922* explores the complex relationship between Conservatives and Lloyd George's Coalition over the issue of foreign policy.[47] Her book offers a good assessment of the debates around Genoa and Bolshevik Russia more generally. However, its lack of insight into any domestic implications of such threats, or indeed of any domestic issues at all, does limit its usefulness. In fact, it is impossible to separate the international from the domestic when analysing the debates around topics such as Bolshevism in this period, and this thesis therefore explores both areas to paint a full picture of these splits. It also strikes me as important to note that differences in the Cabinet arose not just due to party ideological considerations but also due to personal conviction or ministerial perspective over this matter.

What literature there is on the inter-party politics of the time revolves mainly around the key individuals of the political scene. The histories of the Conservative Party itself are illuminating, but often cover vast time-spans and offer little detail on this topic specifically. For example, Ramsden's research on the age of Balfour

[46] K.O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: The Lloyd George Coalition Government*, Oxford, 1979
[47] Inbal Rose, *Conservatism and FP during the Lloyd George Coalition 1918-1922*, Portland, 1999

and Baldwin largely ignores the divides on Bolshevism to explore other areas of disagreement, such as Home rule, India, the Gold Standard and the ever-complicated leadership hopes of the main men of the age.[48] Likewise, his overview of the Conservative Party, like those of Blake and Charmley, were designed to give the reader an understanding of the development of the party in the period and the evolution of policy and approach and therefore offer no detail on these Cabinet debates.[49] The same must be said of those books that focus on the Liberal side of the coalition including the clash between Asquith and Lloyd George, featuring the former's leadership in the Great War and eventual fall in popularity at the hands of Labour.[50] On British politics as a whole, Mowat's classic treatment of the interwar period is also guilty of ignoring this most interesting of inter- (and intra -) party splits, looking instead at the period as a road from one wider conflict to another.[51]

Stuart Ball, in *Portrait of a Party: The Conservative Party in Britain 1918-1945*, is perhaps the most comprehensive and detailed book on the Conservative Party during this period. Its approach is wide-ranging and examines the party at all levels, from membership to leadership. The debates on Bolshevism and the impact that the ideology has on the party are certainly analysed here, especially the impact on voters and the ways in which the party machine use this to great effect in elections such as that of 1924. Its length and span are, however, the factors that also mean that it can only go into a certain level of detail on the issue of Bolshevism; therefore the Cabinet splits, factionalism and evolution of these debates remain open for this thesis to explore.[52] The Diehards' similarities and differences with the Hardliners of this thesis have already been discussed, and a number of books helped me come to this conclusion. N. C. Fleming, in his article *'Diehard Conservatism'*, offers a clear analysis of what influenced such men and the importance of issues such as India upon them. Ball too discusses the group in '*Portrait of a Party'*, mentioning their anti-Bolshevik views.[53] Nigel Keohane must also be mentioned as his book, *The Party of Patriotism*, is an excellent overview of the Conservative Party during the Great War.[54] Only one year of the period covered by

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[48] John Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, 1902-1940*, London, 1978

[49] R. Blake, *The Conservative party from Peel to Churchill*, London, 1972; John Ramsden, *An Appetite for Power*; John Chamley, *A History of Conservative Politics*

[50] Paul Adleman, *The Decline of the Liberal Party, 1910-31*, Cambridge, 1995; G.R Searle, *The Liberal Party*, London, 2000;

[51] Charles Mowat, *Britain between the wars: 1918–1940* (2nd ed.), London, 1978;

[52] S. Ball, P*ortrait of a Party: The Conservative Party in Britain 1918-1945*, Oxford, 2013

[53] N.C Fleming, Diehard Conservatism, Mass Democracy, and Indian Constitutional Reform, c.1918–35, *Parliamentary History*, 32, No. 2 (2013), 337-360: Ball, *Portrait of a Party*

[54] Nigel Keohane, *The Party of Patriotism: The Conservative Party and the First World War*, Farnham, 2010

this thesis is within the book's time-frame, and yet his analysis succeeds in showing how the period gave a firm foundation for the anti-socialist and anti-Bolshevik campaigns of the post-war decades, though the many layers of the party covered and myriad of divergent views do at times make for confusing reading.

Key individuals

On Lloyd George, Baldwin and Churchill, a great deal of literature exists, though none focuses exclusively on their role in Cabinet debates regarding Bolshevism. Gilbert and Owen's research into the Welsh premier unsurprisingly focus on his rise to the position of Prime Minister, his clashes with Asquith, and his role as a war leader. Both also emphasise his role at Versailles in terms of sanctions on Germany rather than dealing with his domestic difficulties with a Cabinet increasingly obsessed with Russia.[55] John Griggs' fine research into Lloyd George during the war, *Lloyd George, War Leader*, is of course limited in its scope to the years of conflict but paints the picture of the man's approach to socialism and interwar unrest.[56] Michael Fry has perhaps written the major modern study on this period with his book, *And Fortune Fled*.[57] His detailed analyses of the Prime Minister between 1916 and 1922 uses the diaries of a number of government figures to paint a clear picture of the man, his views, influences and decisions. It examines in detail his time at Versailles, reaction to Churchill's quest for intervention, and the unrest in Britain at the time, and chronicles the changes that Lloyd George made to the government and the nation. Though it represents just one aspect of this thesis and does not analyse the Cabinet splits of Bolshevism specifically, it, alongside Griggs and Morgan, have been vital guides to the Coalition years. Lloyd George's self-penned reflections on Versailles and his war memoirs are also of use, though the focus stays firmly upon the treaties themselves in the context of its publication date of 1938, while the diaries of Lloyd George's then secretary and later wife, Frances Stevenson, show just how deep his frustration with Churchill and Cabinet was getting. The focus on other issues in both, the likelihood of bias and the benefit of hindsight, are, of course, issues worth considering too – but both remain excellent resources.[58]

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[55] Bentley Gilbert, *David Lloyd George: A Political Life: Organizer of Victory, 1912–1916*, London, 1992; Frank Owen, *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George, His Life and Times*, London 1954

[56] John Grigg, *Lloyd George, War Leader 1916-18*, London, 2011

[57] Michael Fry, *And Fortune Fled: David Lloyd George, the First Democratic Statesman 1916-1922*, New York, 2010

[58] Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of Lloyd George*, London, 1938; *David Lloyd George, The Truth About The Peace Treaties*, London, 1938; A.J.P Taylor (ed), *Lloyd George: A Diary by Frances Stevenson*, New York, 197

A great deal of research obviously exists on Churchill, yet many authors also treat debates on Russia in this period as merely a footnote in the great man's history – a period sandwiched between his glorious youth as a soldier, his political rise as a young man, his failures in the First World War and his triumphs in the Second. The major biographies by Jenkins, Best, Jackson and Rose were valuable resources as all discuss the period under investigation in this thesis and especially look at the events around Intervention and Churchill's views on Socialism, Bolshevism and the General Strike, though given their scope and subject matter, the information is relatively broad and focused on Churchill's personal views and motivations.[59] Gilbert does devote a lengthy section to the period between 1916 and 1922, looking at the rise of Bolshevism, debates around Intervention and Churchill's reaction to industrial unrest within Britain, providing a useful guide to understanding his involvement in these debates.[60] Paul Addison, in his in-depth study of Churchill's domestic politics, was another useful resource, analysing his position on the major domestic issues of the period, his political manoeuvring and his crossing of the floor. His chapters on the Impact of Labour and General Strike were good overviews of the man's views on these issues and summarised some of the Cabinet clashes I explore in detail.[61] One other book that stands apart due to its exclusive focus on the two key men of this period is Toye's *Rivals for Greatness*. Its focus, as the title suggests, is not the splits that occurred over the threat of Bolshevism, or the positioning of the Cabinet as a whole, but instead the personal relationship between Lloyd George and Churchill. Its exploration of the events in Paris that led to the political chasm between the two shows the beginnings of these cracks, and the later descriptions of each man's frustrations with the other provide a crucial insight into their relationship and their views on matters of class and industrial relations.[62]

David Carlton looks at Churchill's evolving relationship with the Soviet Union between 1917 and 1955 in his book, Churchill and the Soviet Union; this is a short but useful look at his views and influences, especially concerning Intervention. The book, however, is largely focused on the Second World War, the Cold War and

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[59] Roy Jenkins, *Churchill: A Biography*, London, 2002: Robert Blake, *Winston Churchill*, Gloucestershire, 1998: Henry Pelling, *Winston Churchill*, London, 1974; Norman Rose, *Churchill: An Unruly Life*, 2009: Ashley Jackson, C*hurchil*l, London, 2011: Geoffrey Best, *Churchill: A Study in Greatness*, Oxford, 2002

[60] Martin Gilbert, *Churchill the Official Biography*, Volume IV. The Stricken World, 1916-1922, London, 1966;

[61] Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front 1900 – 1955*, London, 1993

[62] Richard Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill: Rivals for Greatness*, London, 2008

a comparison of Churchill's approach to Communism and Fascism with his main arguments, centring on the pragmatic alliance between Churchill and his ideological enemy and his motivations for this.[63] Clifford Kinvig looks in detail at Churchill's obsession with intervention and British involvement in the Russian Civil War, and proved a good guide for my chapter on the topic. However, this is, as Kinvig himself points out, a book that deals essentially with the military operations at the heart of Britain's intervention, the activities of the servicemen that conducted them, and the military direction that Churchill gave to the venture. The sections on the debate within the Cabinet look largely at the key split between Lloyd George and Churchill; however, save discussion of Wilson (due to his military links), it goes into no detail on the wider divide in the Cabinet in those times.[64] Robert Rhodes James' look at Churchill's flaws and political mistakes in the period, and Lawrence James' exploration of his relationship with Empire were also both useful background reading.[65] Churchill's own writing on the period is, however, a fascinating insight into his clashes over the issue and his lifelong hatred of Bolshevism, although, with hindsight of a European Cold War affecting his views, a touch of caution must be exercised by the reader. The same can be said of his book, *Great Contemporaries*, looking at his Cabinet colleagues during the period – a useful resource when read with a rather hefty pinch of salt.[66]

A wealth of material is available on Baldwin, though on his role in the Cabinet debates and splits over Bolshevism there is little. Obviously those books already discussed which offer overviews of the Conservative Party in this period are a key source of information, but a number of important biographies also exist. Philip Williamson offers an excellent exploration of Baldwin's Premiership and early life, offering thoughts on his political influences as well as analysing his character and the decisions he made. He argues that Baldwin was not convinced by the idea that the unions supported Bolshevism or revolution, unlike many in his Cabinet, and paints a picture of a man with a strong understanding of industry and a sympathetic attitude to the men who worked within it, seeing Bolshevism as a symptom of a nation's failings at dealing with these men and their just concerns.[67] G.M Young's biography is now dated but still offers valuable insight

[63] David Carlton, *Churchill and the Soviet Union*, New York, 2000
[64] Clifford Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade: the British Invasion of Russia 1918-1920*, Oxford, 1969
[65] Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill a Study in Failure 1900-1939*, London, 1981; Lawrence James, *Churchill and Empire*, London, 2014
[66] Winston Churchill, *The Aftermath, The World Crisis 1918-1928*, London, 1929; Winston Churchill, *Great Contemporaries*, London, 1947;
[67] Phillip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, Cambridge, 2007; Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin. Conservative Leadership and National Values*, Cambridge 1999

into the man and the decision-making process around events such as the General Strike, while it does discuss the way in which the industrial relations clashes were settled with the help of Baldwin's moderate approach to the strikers and their influences. Written before the archives were opened, however, he does have a habit of ascribing important statements to unnamed friends or members of parliament.[68] Jenkins as usual offers a strong, if sometimes superficial, overview of Baldwin and his life and leadership, as does Watts.[69] Raymond's edited selection of essays on Baldwin were also worth noting, especially Robert Blake's, which explores his relationship with the right of his party to good effect.[70]

A number of key biographies are also worth special mention in this literature review due to their use in establishing the factions over the issue of Bolshevism, providing background on the key figures and acting as route maps for other sources, both secondary and primary, that I went on to look at in detail. Robert Blake's biography of Bonar Law is the key work on this often-overlooked Prime Minister. The information on his relationship with Lloyd George and Churchill – as well as his involvement in debates around intervention and industrial unrest – was especially illuminating. The same to a lesser degree is true of the work by Adams.[71] On Austen Chamberlain, David Dutton's excellent biography gave a good overview of his youth, influences and political outlook as well as his role in the debates surrounding intervention, Russian trade and industrial unrest.[72] Curzon is also the subject of some key works. David Gilmour stands out as the key point of reference, but Rose and Mosely are also worth noting (as is the contemporary biography by the Earl of Ronaldshay).[73] His later life, including the debates around Russian Bolshevism, are discussed in Bennett and Gibson's *The Later Life of Lord Curzon*.[74] For all three of these key figures, however, the focus is largely on other glories; the discussion around their views on Bolshevism and the relevant debates are not a key focus.

Neville Chamberlain's biographies by Self, Dilks and Dutton are key reading to understand a man caught between his pragmatic instinct and ideological paranoia. All show his conflicting views on how to deal with

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[68] G.M. Young, *Stanley Baldwin*, London 1952

[69] Roy Jenkins, *Baldwi*n, London, 1987; Duncan Watts, *Stanley Baldwin and the Search for Consensus*, London, 1996

[70] R. Blake, *Baldwin And The Right*, in J.Raymond (ed),*The Baldwin Age*, London, 1960

[71] R. Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister. The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law, 1858-1923*, London, 1995; R.J.K Adams, *Bonar Law*, London, 2013

[72] David Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain, Gentleman in Politics*, London, 1986;

[73] David Gilmour, *Lord Curzon: Imperial Stateman, Londo*n, 2003; Leonard Mosley, *Curzon: The End of an Epoch*, London, 1961; K. Rose, *Superior Person: A Portrait of Curzon and his Circle in Late Victorian England*, London, 1969; *The Earl of Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon* Vol 1, London, 1928;

[74] G.H. Bennett and M. Gibson, *The Later Life of Lord Curzon of Kedleston*, Lampeter, 2000

poverty and the threat it represented, though all largely portray this threat as a political one. With the focus on his time as Prime Minister and Appeasement, there is little discussion of the events of these times, or his view on the Cabinet clashes over how to deal with the domestic unrest of the period.[75] Lord Birkenhead's key modern biography is that of John Campbell, which offers a fully researched and excellent analysis of his life, both in and out of politics. It describes in detail his views on Bolshevism, his relationship with other members of the Cabinet, and his actions around Genoa, the General Strike and other key events in this thesis.[76] Previous biographies are of less use; his son's two-volume biography, first published in 1936 but revised, condensed and reissued in 1960, strikes the reader as a work of loyalty to a deceased father rather than a fair analysis of his life. Similar criticism can be offered on Birkenhead's Private Secretary's contemporary work, while the 1960 *Glittering Prizes* is the opposite – an attack on the man describing his arrogance, failure and other flaws to the extent that its balance must be questioned.[77]

On Balfour, a number of studies on his life exist. Balfour's niece, Blanche Dugdale, produced a two-volume biography in 1936, followed in 1962 by Kenneth Young's book and in 1973 by Sydney Zebel's. However, Dugdale's work bears the marks of family sympathy and idolisation; Young's was after the fifty-year rule of archive publication; and Zebel ventures not at all into Balfour's personal life or what made him view the political world the way he did.[78] The key works referenced in this thesis were therefore those of Mackay and Egremont, who both give a good overview of Balfour's career and influences, though as would be expected are weighted towards his years at the summit of politics, as did R. J. Q Adams' recent work, *The Last Grandee*.[79] On Milner Terence, O'Brien and Marlowe proved the key works, though both focus more on the Boer War and his pre-war career, the former even referring the reader to Ullman for information on the debates around Intervention.[80] Another key figure, William Johnson-Hicks, has surprisingly little in the way of biographies, with the key resources being contemporary publications and the more useful article by Huw

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[75] David Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain*, London, 2001; David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain: Volume 1, 1969-1929*, Cambridge 1984; Robert Self, *Neville Chamberlain*, Aldershot, 2006; Nick Smart, *Neville Chamberlain*, London. 2009;

[76] John Campbell, *F.E Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead*, London, 1991

[77] The Earl of Birkenhead, *The Life of F.E Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead*, London, 1960; C.E Roberts, L*ord Birkenhead: being an account of the life of F.E. Smith, first earl of Birkenhead*, London, 1926; William Camp, *The Glittering Prizes, a Biographical study of F.E Smith*, London, 1960

[78] Blanche Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour,Volume 2- 1906–1930*, London, 1936; Kenneth Young, *Arthur James Balfour: The happy life of the Politician, Prime Minister, Statesman and Philosopher- 1848–1930*, London, 1963; Sydney Zebel, *Balfour: A Political Biography.* Cambridge, 1973

[79] Max Egremont, *Balfour: A Life of Arthur James Balfour,* London, 1980; R.F Mackay, *Balfour: Intellectual Statesman*, London 1985; R.J.Q Adams, *Balfour; The Last Grandee*, London, 2007

[80] John Marlow, *Milner: Apostle of Empire*, London, 1976, Terence O'Brien, *Milner*, London, 1979

Clayton in 2010.[81] Other key biographies referenced in the book were Cross on Hoare, Johnson on Cecil and Petrie on Walter Long, all of which offered important background and context but as wider biographies no in-depth detail on the their topical characters' roles in the debates surrounding Bolshevism.[82]

A number of primary sources were also of great use. One example was Sir Henry Wilson's diaries discussing the split between the Prime Minister and Churchill, as well as his own views on the dangers of Bolshevism.[83] Lord Riddell and Maurice Hankey, both of whom accompanied the Prime Minister to Versailles, also wrote diaries at the time, as did Colonel House, the American diplomat who was approached regarding intervention in Russia by both Lloyd George and Churchill.[84] These sources, of course, primarily give the individuals' viewpoints and sadly offer very little other information on the wider splits on the threat of Bolshevism. The published letters of both Chamberlains were also invaluable in establishing their personal views on the matter, as were those of Baldwin, while the diaries of Leo Amery gave context to a number of the key clashes and offered his view on the divisions within Cabinet over the matter.[85] In terms of domestic politics, the memoirs and diaries of J. C. C. Davidson (The Conservative MP and aide to Bonar Law and Baldwin), Thomas Jones (Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet) and George Riddell (the newspaper magnate and confident of Lloyd George) were all illuminating. So too were the diaries of the Conservative politician, Duff Cooper.[86]

The British Left

As well as understanding the Conservative and Liberal Parties and key figures, I also drew on a number of key works on the British Left, which provided context on the threat of domestic Bolshevism and the motivations and make-up of the unions and other relevant organisations among other things. None, however, delve into the internal debate within government, or the discussions among leading politicians on how to

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[81] H.A. Taylor, *Official Biography of the Rt. Hon. William Joynson-Hicks, First Viscount, Brenford of Newic*, London, 1933; Huw Clayton, 'The life and career of Sir William Joynson-Hicks 1865-1932: a reassessment', *Journal of Historical Biography*, 8 (2010) pp. 1-38

[82] J.A. Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare*, London, 1977; Gaynor Johnson, *Lord Robert Cecil: Politician and Internationalist*, Ashgate, 2013; Sir C Petrie, *Walter Long and his Times*, London 1936; Andreas, A., *Phillip Snowden*, London, 1930

[83] Major General Sir C.E. Callwell, *Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries*, Two Volumes, London, 1927

[84] M. Hankey, *Supreme Command 1914-1918 – Supreme Control at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919*, Australia, 1963; Lord Riddell, Lord *Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Paris Peace Conference and After, 1918-1923*, London, 1933; Charles Seymour, ed., *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House' 4* Volumes, Boston, 1926-1928, Vol 4

[85] R. Self (ed.)., *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters*: *Volume 2. The Reform Years, 1921-27* ,Aldershot, 2000; Sir. C. Petrie, *The Life and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain*, London, 1939; P. Williamson and E. Baldwin, *The Baldwin Papers: A Conservative Statesman, 1908 – 1947*, Cambridge, 2004: John Barnes, David Nicholson (eds.) *Leo Amery Diaries, Volume 1: 1896-1929*, London, 1980

[86] J.R. Rhodes., *Memoirs of a Conservative: J.C.C Davidson's Memoirs and Papers*, 1910-37, London, 1969; T. Jones., *Whitehall Diary, Volume 1*, London 1969; M. McEwen (ed.)., *The Riddell Diaries, A Selection*, London, 1986; Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, London, 1953

cope with this new threat. Graubard's study on Labour and the Russian Revolution shows the links between the organisations, but discounts any attempt by the former to incite revolution at home.[87] Cowden and Ward agree, although Mitchell argues that, in fact, Britain was at risk of class war, and that only its relative lack of social and economic destruction post-war held it at bay.[88] It is also important to factor in the perceived international threat of Bolshevik Russia, focused on the return of the Great Game and loss of India – something key to comprehending the hysteria of many within government and vital for an overall understanding of these debates.[89] In terms of the strikes and industrial unrest of the time, Wrigley's research on the Labour Party and the industrial challenges faced by Lloyd George offers a useful overview of the unrest and a look at some of the debates occurring within government, though it does not go into much detail on the Conservative members of Cabinet and, for the most part, fails to discuss fears of Bolshevism as a major factor.[90] Though little research exists on the discussions within government, there is a great deal on the discussions within the union movement. Pelling, Laybourn and Clegg discuss the rise of agitation and clashes with the state in the period.[91] Sewell, too, albeit very different in his approach, does not delve in any depth into the government's response to union posturing.[92] Alan Campbell and Nina Fishman's look at the unions of the period does the same.[93] D. Calhoun gives us a detailed analyses of the links between the TUC and Russia in the period, especially around the General Strike and events of 1927, while Martin's look at Communism and its role within the Trade Union movement; this was of great interest when analysing the reality of the threat as seen in Cabinet.[94] Hennessy and Jeffery offer a detailed look at the escalation of violence from the government side, with their examination of strike-breaking and government contingency plans in the post First World War period, though they focus on the machinery, method and use of strike-breaking legislation and policy, and not on the wider political scene or discussion.[95] Millman also offers some important background on the unrest with his look at the domestic dissent during the First World War;

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[87] Stephen Richards Graubard, *British Labour and the Russian Revolution 1917-1924*, Cambridge, 1956;

[88] Morton H. Cowden, *Russian Bolshevism and British Labour 1917-21*, New York, 1984; Paul Ward,'*Red Flag and Union Jack, Englishness, Patriotism and the British left, 1881-1924*, Woodridge, 1998; David Mitchell, *1919: Red Mirage*, London, 1970

[89] For background on the Great Game see; A. Clayton, *The British Empire as a Superpower, 1919-1939*, London, 1986; L.J. Butler, *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post Imperial World*, London, 2002; Keith Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire 1918 – 1922*, Manchester, 1984; G.H. Bennett, *British Foreign Policy During the Curzon Period, 1919-1924*, London 1995; John Callaghan, *Blowing up India: the Comintern and India, 1928–35* in, Matthew Worley, *In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period*, London, 2004;

[90] Chris Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour in the Post War Coalition 1918-1922*, London, 1990

[91] Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, 4th edition, Harmondsworth, 1987; Keith Laybourn, *A History of British Trade Unionism: 1770-1900*, London, 1992; H. A Clegg, *History of British Trade Unions since 1889. Vol. 2, 1911–33*, Oxford, 1993

[92] Rob Sewell, *In the Cause of Labour: A History of the British Trade Unions, 1792-2003*, London, 2003

[93] Alan Campbell and Nina Fishman, *Miners, Unions and Politics, 1910-1947*, New York, 1996;

[94] D. Calhoun, *The United Front: The TUC and the Russians 1923-1928*, Cambridge, 1976: R. Martin, *Communism and the British Trade Unions 1924-1933: A Study of the National Minority Movement*, Oxford, 1969

[95] Keith Jeffery and Peter Hennessy, *States of Emergency: British Governments and Strikebreaking since 1919*, London 1983

Hinton adds to this with his research on the early shop stewards movement, which he argues was the catalyst of British revolutionary theory and ideology.[96]

This growth in both the unions and, less directly, in revolutionary feeling is mirrored in the establishment of the Labour Party itself as a political force – a force that many Conservative politicians feared, or perhaps cynically claimed, was a front for the more extreme policies of international Bolshevism. Worley, concentrating on the local level of Labour Party politics in the era, argues that the idea of a united front was a popular one; Lyman, on the other hand, argues that Labour was, in fact, often pursuing the same votes as the Liberal Party. Both agree that there were connections between Labour and Moscow, though not strong ones.[97] Wrigley believes that this period shattered the illusions of the far left, as the capitalist system did not collapse, nor did working class people rise up to 'follow Russia', believing that the establishment of a strong British Communist Party came too late.[98] All of these works focus on the inner machinations of the left, while understandably only briefly describing the actions of their Liberal and Conservative foes. The same can be said of the majority of research on the British Communist Party, giving good accounts of its make-up, members and the threat it offered, though not on the way it was perceived or the debates over how to react to it within the government. Kendall, Challinor, Klugmann and Pelling have all authored major histories of the Communists in Britain between the wars, though their publication dates mean that not all sources were available.[99] Beckett, Linehan and Worley's more recent examples compliment these, and all were key background reading for a left-wing perspective, showing the real threat, the main campaigns and aims and the clashes with government in detail.[100] Thorpe and Cowden give a good analyses of the links between the left in Britain and Moscow, as well as a useful guide to membership.[101]

Key events

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[96] Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain, London*, 2000: James Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards Movement*, London, 1973

[97] M. Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party between the Wars*, London, 2005; Richard W. Lyman, *The First Labour Government 1924*, New York, 1957

[98] C. Wrigley, *The State and the Challenge of Labour in Britain, 1917–20, In Challenges of Labour: Central and Western Europe, 1917–20*, London, 1993

[99] Walter Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain, 1900 – 1921* , London, 1969; Challinor, *Origins of British Bolshevism*, London, 1977; James Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain:* Volume 1 Foundation and Early Years, London, 1968; Henry Pelling, *The British Communist Party, A Historical Profile*, London, 1958

[100] F. Beckett, *Enemy Within: The rise and fall of the British Communist Party*, London, 1995; T. Linehan, *Communism in Britain 1920-1939*, Manchester, 2007; M Worley, *Class Against Class: The Communist Party of Great Britain between the Wars*, London, 2002

[101] Andrew Thorpe, T*he British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920–43*, Manchester, 2000; Morton H. Cowden, *Russian Bolshevism and British Labour 1917-21*, New York, 1984; Andrew Thrope, The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1945, *The Historical Journal*, 43, No.3 (2000), 777-800

There a number of historical works that were useful in terms of piecing together the events and some of the broader arguments within the British Government.[102] It was the debates around Intervention, however, that saw the first major clashes in the British Cabinet, and these events and the actions of several leading politicians are recorded in a number of key works. John Thompson's *Russia, Bolshevism and the Versailles Peace* is a detailed and well-researched overview of the Allies' views on Russia and the impact that these had at Versailles. He also discusses the Russian Civil War and allied debates and actions around the issue of Intervention.[103] The key works on intervention itself, however, are undoubtedly Richard Ullman and Michael Kettle's respective trilogies. Ullman analyses the Allies' intervention in Russia. The second book is key for this topic and looks at the role of Britain in great detail, though its focus is largely on military actions within Russia and discussions between high-ranking officers and politicians.[104] Ullman's work is an excellent survey of the official British Russian policy, but is somewhat weaker in terms of analysing the execution of Cabinet policies in the field. It is worth noting that the Churchill Papers are absent as they were not opened at the time of writing. Michael Kettle's massive and fantastically researched *Russia and the Allies 1917-1920* was also an extremely useful source. It stresses the importance of the British role in the Civil War, but as a general history; though the third volume focuses on Churchill and Archangel and includes details of his clashes with Lloyd George, it devotes little time to the Cabinet's differing views or actions on the issue.[105] Damien Wright, in his book on intervention, is also largely focused on military action, though he does offer some analysis of Churchill and his conflict with Lloyd George in his push for action.[106] Other sources of relevance are Moore, Mead and Jahns and the now very aged Coates.[107]

The domestic unrest that inspired a number of key debates in the Lloyd George period has been studied in the existing literature. MacLean describes the strikes in which government hawks took control, deploying tanks and troops, as revolutionary.[108] Middlemas agrees, saying that it was only the failure of the far left

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[102] Orlando Figes, *A People Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924*, London, 1997
[103] John Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism and the Versailles Peace*, Princeton, 1966;
[104] Richard Ullman, *Anglo Soviet Relations, 1917-1921, Volume* 2, *Britain and the Russian Civil War*, Oxford, 1968
[105] Michael Kettle, *Russia and the Allies 1917-1920, Volume 3, Churchill and the Archangel Fiasco November 1918-July 1919*, London, 1992
[106] Damien Wright, *Churchill's Secret War with Lenin: British and Commonwealth Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1918-1920*, Solihull, 2017
[107] Joel. R. Moore, Harry H Mead, Lewis E Jahns, *The History of the American Expedition Fighting the Bolsheviki*, Nashville, 2003; W.P and Zelda K. Coates, *Armed Intervention in Russia, 1918-1922*, London 1935;
[108] Ian MacLean, *The legend of Red Clydeside*, Edinburgh, 1983

across the country to rise up in unison that enabled the government to maintain control.[109] Kenefick and McIvor describe the worsening mood from 1910 and throughout the war on the Clyde, explaining the rise of Bolshevik feeling there.[110] None of these works offer any detailed analysis on the internal debates occurring within Westminster over which course of action to take. The Hands-Off Russia movement group are described well by Macfarlane, while Borzecki's work on the Russo-Polish conflict is also very useful in understanding the circumstances behind the protests.[111] Again, however, they provide mainly background understanding and context for, rather than any detail on, the government's reaction to this organisation and the links with extremists it so obviously held. The next true test of government authority and unity would come with a series of escalating military strikes in 1919. The historiography that focuses on the strikes themselves has been largely partisan in nature, often tending to play up the Bolshevist or, at a minimum, the trade union influence. The key literature on this is the book by Andrew Rothstein, who uses a wide range of sources to detail the unrest, though his analyses of Cabinet reactions and real political motivations are not as strong as his descriptions of events.[112] The other most useful source is the article by Butler, which looks in detail at the charge of Bolshevism laid at the strikers' door both then and subsequently.[113] Tom Wintringham, a Marxist himself, wrote of his own role and made too much of the political views of those alongside him.[114] Julian Putkowski and Gloden Dallas and Douglas Gill discuss the unrest in terms of military authority and the loss of command by higher ranks. These accounts are useful as background but their focus is not on the political debates surrounding the strikes.[115] In terms of the police strikes, Dinot's overview of the police in the period, and Reynolds' and Judge's collaborative work on the event itself, provide a detailed log of events, but offer no wider picture of the strike other than as another 'apparent' symptom of Bolshevik-inspired unrest. Any discussion of the government's response is limited to reaction to the strike itself – not the ongoing political fracture over what such strikes might represent.[116]

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[109] R.K. Middlemas, *The Clydesiders*, London 1965

[110] William Kenefick and Arthur McIvor, *Roots of Red Clydeside, 1910-1914*, Edinburgh, 1997;

[111] L. J.. Macfarlane, *Hands off Russia: British Labour and the Russo-Polish War, 1920*, London, 1968; Jerzy Borzęcki, *The Soviet-Polish Peace of 1921 and the Creation of Interwar Europe*, Yale, 2008

[112] A. Rothstein, *The Soldiers' Strikes of 1919*, London, 1980.

[113] William Butler, The British Soldier is no Bolshevik: The British Army, Discipline, and the Demobilization Strikes of 1919, *Twentieth Century British History*, 44 (2018), 321-346

[114] T. Wintringham, *Mutiny: Being a Survey of Mutinies from Spartacus to Invergordon* (London, 1936).

[115] G. Dallas and D. Gill, *The Unknown Army; Mutinies in the British Army in World War I*, Thetford, 1985; J. Putkowski, *British Army mutineers 1914-1922*, London, 1998

[116] G. Dilnot, *Scotland Yard 1829-1929*, London, 1956; Gerald Reynolds and Anthony Judge, *The Night the Police went on Strike*, London, 1968

With the rise of Baldwin to the premiership, the balance of power within the Cabinet began to shift. The majority of the work that was helpful in the treatment of these events has already been mentioned above. The election of 1924, however, saw a number of events occur, which would have huge relevance for any study of the Cabinet and Bolshevism in this period. Stuart Ball discusses the tactics used by the Conservative Party to galvanise concerned middle-class voters against the threat of socialism – something also discussed in Andrew Taylor's article on the Baldwin Government as a whole.[117] With the authenticity and political use of the Zinoviev Letter still such a talking point, it is perhaps unsurprising that it receives so much attention, in contrast to the Campbell case which remains largely unresearched. The two key books of reference on Zinoviev are Chester, Fay and Young's analyses of the authenticity and events surrounding the Zinoviev Letter in 1924 and Ferris and Bar-Joseph on the letter and actions of the security services and the important role of the press.[118] For the Campbell Case, Siederer's article offers a good analyses of the event, including on the Conservative reaction, while Marquand's biography of MacDonald is a good source for the reaction of the Labour leadership and the build-up to the case.[119] The next few dangerous months set the scene for the General Strike, which would occur the following year. On the events of Red Friday, the published collection of speeches from Stanley Baldwin himself, aptly named *Peace and Goodwill*, gives a clear insight into his motivations, while from the opposing side, Walter Citrine's autobiography gives a fascinating and lengthy description of the events of 1925.[120] As the Triple Alliance of Miners, Railwaymen and Dockers flexed its muscles in the early 1920s, divides in the Conservative Cabinet began to grow ever wider. For many historians, this was in part due to the blurring of socialism and Bolshevism by many in the Cabinet – a view held, for example, by Hunt.[121]

The General Strike would last nine days and though heavily covered as an event, the factions that formed and fell apart within the Cabinet for its duration are not yet well researched or analysed. Though segments of these debates are discussed in the myriad books looking at the strike, there is no full analysis of the breakdown within government, how this reflected the reality of the revolutionary threat, or indeed how it was

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[117] Stuart Ball, *Local Conservatism and the Evolution of the Party*' Organization, in Anthony Seldon and Stuart Ball, (eds*), Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900*, Oxford, 1994; Andrew J. Taylor, Stanley Baldwin, Heresthetics and the Realignment of British Politics, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol 35, 3, 2005

[118] Lewis Chester, Stephen Fay and Hugo Young, *The Zinoviev Letter*, London, 1967; J. Ferris and U. Bar-Joseph, Getting Marlowe to hold his tongue: The Conservative Party, the Intelligence Services and the Zinoviev Letter, *Intelligence and National Security*, 8 (1993), 100-137

[119] N.D. Siederer, 'The Campbell Case', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 9, no. 2 (1974): David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald*, London, 1977

[120] Walter Citrine, *Men and Work*, London, 1976; *Stanley Baldwin, Peace and Goodwill in Industry: Three Speeches*, London, 1925

[121] Allen Hunt, *Post War History of the British Working Class*, London, 1937

overcome. The literature that does exist on the history of the strike itself largely seeks to describe events and triggers, often ignoring this complex positioning occurring within the Cabinet. Some, such as Renshaw and Perkins, insist that the strike was a legal act of industrial unrest, dismissing Conservative overreaction or political manoeuvring, though both readily admit that extremist elements were working hard among those on the pickets to stir up violence.[122] Symons, Morris and Laybourn are sympathetic to this view. However, for them the character of the strike is characterised as a non-violent appeal for an improvement in working and living conditions rather than as a revolutionary movement: despite government rhetoric, any threat of class war erupting was negligible.[123] Phillips offers a detailed account of events, focusing largely on the TUC and Labour perspective, and makes clear the lack of understanding between these and the rank and file miners whose militancy had led to the strike itself. Here, he claims, was the potential for revolution, while Crook offers the perspective that, had it continued, the far left may have gained the ascendency in the inter-union power struggles.[124] Martin Kingsley agrees, setting out a claim that revolution was indeed a real possibility, and for many agitators a key aim, justifying Conservative fears and placing the blame for the non-event on the failure of more centrist Labour and TUC leaders.[125] Despite these, there are real and obvious gaps in the available literature. The work on domestic Communism and the potential for revolution does not look at the government's reaction and how this would play a part. It also ignores the on-going debate within the Conservatives over the issue. The books that detail the events of the strike and discuss the TUC leadership and the reactions of key Cabinet members do not discuss the influence or fear of Bolshevism regarding either in great detail. Lastly, on the Arcos raid and eventual end of relations with Russia, there is relatively little by way of research, with Andrew's and Flory's articles on the events leading up to the raid and breach of relations the key sources.[126]

This thesis will seek to fill these gaps in the literature by analysing the splits that occurred within the Cabinet over Bolshevism from 1917 to 1927, looking at the factions that evolved, and establishing how this impacted

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[122] Patrick Renshaw, *The General Strike*, London, 1975; Anne Perkins, *A Very British Strike*, 2006

[123] Julian Symons, *The General Strike*, 2001 (written and self published in 1957); Margaret Morris, *The General Strike'* London, 1980; , Keith Laybourn, *The General Strike of 1926*, Manchester, 1993

[124] G.A. Phillips,*'The General Strike: The Politics of Industrial Conflict*, London, 1976; W.H Crook, *The General Strike*, North Carolina, 1931, W.H. Crook, *Communism and the General Strike*, North Carolina, 1960

[125] Martin Kingsley, *The British Public and the General Strike,1926*; see also A Mason, The Government and the General Strike, *International Review of Social History*, 14, 1969; R.A Florey, The General Strike of 1926, 1980

[126] C. Andrew, 'British Intelligence and the Breach with Russia in 1927, *Historical Journal 25*, No. 4, (1982), 673; Harriette Flory, The Arcos Raid and the Rupture of Ango-Soviet Relations, 1927 *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (1977), 707-723

the leadership of Lloyd George and later Stanley Baldwin. It will look at how the uncertainties of the age, the political situation in the aftermath of the First World War and the external factors impacting government (the rise of Labour, the return of troops etc.) all played a part in these debates – not least in weakening the confines of Cabinet collective responsibility. Lastly, this thesis will seek to establish how the government's policy on the domestic threat of Bolshevism was arrived at given the insurmountable divide within the Cabinet throughout the period, and will argue that, as a result of all of these specific factors, it allowed a middle-way policy to be adopted by the Prime Ministers of the time, balancing the extremes of the Cabinet Hardliners and strengthening the moderation of the Pragmatists.

Chapter 3: "Kill the Bolshie, Kiss the Hun?" – Russian Intervention, 1917 – 1921

"The Bolsheviks grin at us from a ruined Russia and their creed, like the plague of influenza, seems to be spreading Westwards from one country to another."[127] *– Beatrice Webb*

As the smoke of war began to clear over Europe in 1918, one thing was clear: a very new continent was now confronting the policy makers of Whitehall and Westminster. The Austro-Hungarian Empire and Tsarist Russia had crumbled into the trench-torn earth of the Great War. In the East, Russia was now engaged in bloody civil war, with Lenin's Bolsheviks fighting from Archangel to the Caspian against the collection of White Russian Generals still loyal to the deposed Tsar. It was a conflict that threatened to have political ramifications across the Western World. In Westminster, politicians of all three parties looked on with different degrees of anticipation and fear. Should Britain and her allies in the West intervene to prevent a powerful Communist state emerging on the Eastern borders of Europe?

Revolution in Russia and Brest-Litovsk

In February 1917, the first revolution swept through Russia; by March, the Tsar had abdicated and the provisional government was in control of the country. For Lloyd George and his ministers, this news was met with alarm and deep concern, largely at what the ramifications would be for the war where large numbers of German and Austro-Hungarian troops were tied down fighting the Russians on the Eastern Front. Indeed, the Revolution in Russia that February led to a host of problems for the allied war effort, with the deposed Tsar's policy acceptable to London, whereas the potential for chaos and an Eastern Front collapse would be a disaster; however, there was still hope that the relatively moderate government could be persuaded to keep the alliance intact.[128] At this point, the Cabinet were largely united in their views, putting the continuation of current war policy ahead of all other concerns. The potential for a moderate socialist government in Russia

[127] Beatrice Webb, *The Diary of Beatrice Webb, III: 1905-1924: The Power to Alter Things*, ed Norman MacKenzie and Jeanne MacKenzie, London 1984, p.316
[128] J.M. Winter, Arthur Henderson, the Russian Revolution, and the Reconstruction of the Labour Party, *The Historical Journal* (1972), 753-773

was also met by all with muted acceptance, seeing the threat of extremism as a far bigger one.[129]

The Cabinet was, with one voice, deeply disturbed by the events in Russia but still focused on the continuing war with Germany and the importance of Russia maintaining its role within that. Lord Milner was perhaps more affected than his colleagues as news of the revolution reached London; a keen observer of Russian affairs, he had only last visited the nation as head of a British delegation in January 1917. He had met with the Tsar and many high-ranking officials and military officers. Robert Bruce Lockhart accompanied him and states that 'until the end of his life, Lord Milner never forgot those three days in Moscow.'[130] It was perhaps this fondness and link with the old regime that would play a large part in his anger at the events and support of the Hardliners for intervention a year later. He was joined in his concern by his close friend Field Marshall Henry Wilson, who was also on the delegation and would come back with no confidence in the regime but a belief that it would hold together until the end of the war.[131]

The simple reason for both men's anger at this point though was perhaps a simple one – their belief that this could turn the tide of the war. As Wilson said after the trip, "if an upheaval were to take place its effect on the course of the war might be disastrous."[132] This view was backed up after the revolution had taken place: in a letter to Sir George Buchannan, the British Ambassador in Petrograd, Milner was clear that the chaos was dangerous for Britain and that order must be found and backed.[133] Though the Cabinet was concerned after the first revolution in March, there was no real panic, even as we have seen among those who would go on to hold much stronger views on the issue of Russia. In part, this was due to other pressing concerns such as the all-important task of the war; however, it was also no doubt due to an acceptance of the harshness of the Tsar's rule and the abject poverty and suffering of many in Russia. Such is the extent of this view that Robert Cecil, who attended Cabinet on the 21st of May, stated his belief that in the interests of encouraging a moderate ally in Russia, that Henderson should travel there to discuss the establishment of a socialist government – a trip he would undertake to no avail given the events of that winter.[134] Indeed, Henderson's

[129] War Cabinet Conclusions, 26 March 1917, CAB 23/2/22 and 28th March 1917, CAB 23/2/25
[130] R.H. Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent*, London, 1932, pp. 160-5
[131] Lockhart, *Memoirs*, p.163
[132] Bodleian Oxford, Milner Papers, Note on Trip to Russia, MS. Milner dep. 88
[133] Milner Papers, Letter to Sir George Buchannan the British Ambassador in Petrograd, Dated May 15th 1917, MS. Milner dep. 354, fols. 98-100
[134] Cabinet Conclusions, 21 May 1917, CAB 23/2/59

report to Lloyd George on the matter makes his view clear. The Prime Minister's lack of action until after the Bolshevik rise would seem to show the view of the Cabinet as a whole, arguing against seeking to change the situation in Russia and advocating that "We must make up our minds to continue the struggle alone with France and America, carrying Russia with us as an inert partner."[135] Despite these hopes, by the end of summer the rise of chaos in Russia and the push for power by the Bolsheviks was greatly complicating the issue. At this point, the Cabinet still remained relatively harmonious on the issue, agreeing that a crippled Russia ruled by men sympathetic to the Allies was far better than a Bolshevik Russia who would leave the war.[136]

The Labour party in Britain was also an important factor to be considered. The March uprising against the Tsar in Russia was met with support from all sides of the political spectrum in Britain. Ramsay MacDonald and others hoped that by supporting the moderates in Russia, they would steal the thunder away from the real militants and steer the Labour movement into traditional political channels, both there and at home.[137] It was this domestic threat that was starting to increase concern in the Cabinet; indeed, as one MP had told the Commons in May 1917, "A deep revolutionary feeling (is) springing up among many of the workmen in this country... I do assure you that you will be astonished and, unless you are very careful, you will bring the country to the very verge of revolution."[138] Despite this, the debate continued, and many held the hope that Russia would remain moderate and allied to Britain. It was with this in mind that Henderson informed the Cabinet of the Stockholm Conference plan – a moderate socialist attempt to bring peace and support moderate socialists in Russia. It was held in September 1917; however, despite Henderson's enthusiasm, the Cabinet balked at attending such an event, voting to refuse Henderson to attend and asking him to resign from government, which he did the following day.[139]

But the willingness of even the Conservative members to still deal with Russia can be seen in the fact that F.E Smith (later Lord Birkenhead), the Attorney-General, also had high hopes for Henderson's plan. He believed that a moderate Russia was the best policy to bring Russia back into the embrace of Europe, and

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[135] F.O Papers, 371/2997, Henderson to Lloyd George, 1 July 1917
[136] J.M Winter , Arthur Henderson, the Russian Revolution, and the Reconstruction of the Labour Party, *The Historical Journal* (1972), 753-773
[137] Raymond Challinor, *The Origins of British Bolshevism*, p. 181
[138] House of Commons Debate, 14 May, 1917
[139] War Cabinet, 10 August 1917, CAB 23/3 and War Cabinet, 11 August 1917, CAB 23/3

through those means undermine the excesses and views of the revolutionaries who had taken root there and threatened the new government.[140] By the September, however, the rise of the Bolsheviks as a political force in Russia was starting to see key Cabinet figures toughen their language. On the 9th of September, Balfour warned Kerensky that support and supplies would cease to be sent to Russia unless military measures to stop the Bolsheviks were put into effect.[141] Milner, too, was now deeply concerned at the situation, warning his friends and colleagues of the great danger that the Bolsheviks represented. He was joined in this view by Field Marshall Henry Wilson and also Winston Churchill, who was now beginning to involve himself in the Russian situation.[142]

Churchill, who was Minister for Munitions from July 1917, seemed to have a limited reaction to the initial news of the Russian Revolution, except to say that he saw the death of the Tsar as "fatal to the allied cause".[143] However, as the Bolsheviks continued to make ground in Russia, Churchill was to become a leading voice on the issue, despite not being a member of the War Cabinet, and later the leading Hardliner in Cabinet. His dislike for socialism was already strong and the evolution of this through the rise of Bolshevism into a burning unfocused hate was starting to show. It was to him an authoritarian creed that trampled down individual liberties, would destroy the society that made him, attack the things like royalty and empire he held dear, and replace them with values abhorrent to his outlook. Like all fears, the fact that it was now potentially a real one, and that Russia could fall to such a creed, thereby risking the war in Europe, only made his passion burn greater. Churchill was filled with a deep fear for Britain and the world.[144]

The situation was to become far more serious with the October revolution and the defeat of Russia's provisional government by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, bringing a communist leadership into power and signifying an end to the status quo of European dynastic politics. Ever self-aware, Britain, from the Victorian era, had been readying itself for loss or calamity to occur in its empire. Indeed, even Rome had fallen; the same fate at the hands of barbarians would surely one day threaten Britain. The Bolsheviks, for many,

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[140] Campbell, *FE Smith*, 592
[141] Balfour Papers, 49738, f. 60
[142] O'Brien, *Milner*, p. 288-9
[143] Churchill, A*fterma*th, p. 71
[144] Rose, C*hurchill*, 147

seemed like the Huns of the modern world.[145] By November, many had started to become more hard-line on the issue.

Milner, as is made clear in Beatrice Webb's diary recording of a conversation that she had with Tom Jones (one of the Prime Minister's secretaries) in October 1917, certainly had: "The War Cabinet is much perturbed at the rumours of revolutionary feeling among the workers… Milner is said to be most alarmed and hankering after peace with the Hohenzollerns lest worse befall the British and German Junker classes alike."[146] Milner would go on to make his views clear in the War Cabinet, and even advocated troops being sent to secure key positions in and around Russia: "If only an Allied military force could be set up as a barrier to the eastward advance of Germany."[147] In Cabinet, the debate continued, with Curzon pushing for some form of action against the Bolsheviks, especially after their announcement that they intended to sue for peace with Germany at any cost.[148]

On the 7th of December 1917, Lenin issued a clarion call to Asia's millions to follow the Russian example and overthrow their oppressors. To Sir George Buchanan, the British Ambassador to Petrograd, this seemed to be aimed at British India. The following day, he denounced the statement, saying that Lenin's speech was "scurrilous", and adding that "Mr Lenin spoke of us as rapacious extortionists and plunderers, while he incited our Indian subjects to rebellion.... it is an unheard of thing for a man who claims to direct Russian policy to use such language to a friendly and allied country."[149] Balfour was shocked; initially, he had been reluctant to force a complete break with the Bolsheviks, largely due to his fear that they would align with Germany. However, once this statement reached him, he quickly reconsidered his options on Russia. In December 1917, he argued that the Bolsheviks' rise to power meant at the very least that a complete break must occur with them.[150] In a memo to the War Cabinet on the 9th of December 1917, he wrote: "They are fanatics to whom the constitution of every state, whether monarchical or republican, is equally odious. Their appeal is to every revolutionary force, economic, social, racial or religious, which can be used to upset the

[145] Overy, *The Morbid Age; Wells, The Salvaging of Civilisation*
[146] Margret Cole (Ed.), *Beatrice Webb Diaries*, 1952, p.97
[147] Bodleian Oxford, Milner Papers, Note to Balfour January 1918, MS. Milner dep. 378
[148] War Cabinet Conclusions, 22 November 1917, CAB 23/4/54
[149] Hopkirk, *Setting The East Ablaze*, p.9-15
[150] War Cabinet minutes, 12 December 1917, CAB 23/4/70

existing political organisations of mankind."[151]

Churchill became the key cheerleader for these new Hardliners. As he had stated earlier in the year, he saw the Bolshevik rise to power and talk of peace with Germany after the revolution as an act of treachery. He stated in December 1917 that: "It is this melancholy event which has prolonged the war that has robbed the French, the British, and the Italian armies of the prize that was perhaps almost within their reach this summer."[152] In his position as Minister of Munitions, Churchill also knew the scale of the resources going to Russia; as a result of the Bolshevik rise, he had taken action to dampen the supplies to a skeleton system – although he wanted the option to quickly return to full production, "in the event of a change in the situation."[153] This is something that would become of great relevance in the future events around intervention and the rise of the White Armies. However, it must be added that Churchill's main motive at this point does still seem to be the war, though his hatred of Bolshevism cannot be underestimated. One interesting but fleeting moment of clarity on this was his willingness to deal with the Bolsheviks shortly before Brest-Litovsk, where he desperately floated the idea of a deal with them if they maintained the Eastern Front: "Show them any real change of consolidating their power, of getting some kind of protection against the vengeance of counter-revolution, and they would be non-human not to embrace it."[154]

However, once it was clear that this would never happen, Churchill was quick to revert to his usual rhetoric regarding Russia. In Cabinet, he, Curzon, Wilson, Milner and Lord Robert Cecil were in agreement that Bolshevism was now a real threat – and could in future be more so. Lloyd George and Austen Chamberlain, however, remained pragmatic, unwilling to commit to any action against the Bolsheviks and instead insistent that all must be done to stop them aiding Germany and to end the war. Balfour remained aloof, as seen in Hankey's description of the War Cabinet meeting on the 8th of February 1918: "Balfour as usual, rather on the hedge between these (LG, Cecil and Churchill)."[155] With the Bolsheviks signing Brest-Litovsk in March, debate was once again to open up and Cabinet again reviewed the situation with Churchill calling for a new

[151] Lloyd George, '*War Memoirs*', II, p. 1545-7
[152] Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade*, p. 9
[153] David Carlton, *Churchill and the Soviet Union*, p. 5
[154] Martin Gilbert, *Churchill and the European Idea*, in R.A.C Parker (ed) *Winston Churchill: Studies in Statesmanship*, London, 1995, p. 203
[155] Cited in Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets Volume 1:1877-1918*, London, 1970, p. 494

strategy to help restore the Tsar (with supplies and support), supported by the Hardliners. Balfour again showed more caution than Churchill and Cecil, or even Milner. Writing to Lloyd George about the issue on the 13th of July 1918, he stated: "A restored Tsardom would be more dangerous to British interests… for it would almost certainly be dependent on German Support… I cannot believe that Russia will ever be content to revert to an outworn despotism."[156]

Milner was torn; he was certainly deeply worried about the situation in Russia and loathed the doctrine of the Bolsheviks but he was acutely aware that the war was in such a delicate phase that all must be done to stop any great advantage for the German forces. It was for both of these reasons that he, alongside Cecil, was willing to support Churchill in his call for a strategy to secure Russian strategic points and potentially help any forces fighting the Bolsheviks.[157] Amery records that in this, Milner especially had the ear and support of Henry Wilson, with both believing that stationing troops in Russia was important both for the war effort and national security. [158] It must be noted though that unlike Churchill and his fearsome rhetoric, Milner did not seem as concerned that the events in Russia would lead to mass unrest at home, arguing that the only reason people feared so, and agitation existed among the working men, was the war causing "frayed nerves and tempers". [159] With the signing of Brest-Litovsk on the 3rd of March between the Russians and the Central Powers, the Cabinet's worst fears had been realised. Effectively, Russia was out of the war and Britain would have to face the full force of the enemy on the Western Front. This was another reason for the fledgling Hardliners to hate the Bolshevik regime in Russia – and one that would not be forgotten in the years to come.

This was a debate that continued throughout the end of the war and that would hold a greater importance within the Cabinet once the Armistice was signed. The revolutions in Russia had set the scene for clashes within the British Coalition and Tory Cabinets over the next decade. Starting with muted acceptance at the fall of the Tsar and concern at the implications for the Western Front by November at the rise of the Bolsheviks, it had turned into fear for both the war, the future of Europe, security in Britain and the British Empire.

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156 Balfour Archives, BM. Add. Mss. 49692. F.295-6
157 O'Brien, *Milner*, pp. 290-295
158 Leo Amey Diaries, Volume II, pp. 157-8
159 Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 135

Argument for intervention and the end of war

With the end of hostilities against Germany in November 1918, the purpose of the Allied troops in Russia was suddenly called into question. Stationed in the ports of Archangel, Vladivostok and Murmansk, their role had begun as a relatively simple one – namely to protect the areas vital for Allied supplies for Russian forces on the Eastern Front. The Russian Civil War and subsequent Bolshevik victories would force these troops into a change in strategy. The signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty by Lenin effectively ended Russian involvement in the War, and threatened to change the precarious balance of forces that had led to the muddy stalemate of the Western Front; it also meant a sea change in British-Russian policy.[160] It was in a power vacuum such as this in mind that Lloyd George had sanctioned the increased numbers of British troops in Russia. It would be a military disaster if the Kaiser was able to move all his troops in Russia to join the offensive in the West. It was imperative to the Allied War Effort that the German forces were not allowed to dominate the Baltic Ports, the Caucasus oil fields and the many important trade routes between Russia, Turkey, Persia and Afghanistan.[161]

The British and French Government decided upon small-scale Allied military intervention in Russia. To avoid any gradual expansion of operations, the forces were given three clear objectives: to prevent the German or Bolshevik capture of Allied material stockpiles in Archangel; to mount an attack helping the Czechoslovak legions stranded on the Trans-Siberian Railroad; and if possible to resurrect a limited Eastern Front against German forces.[162] However, with the end of the First World War following the 1918 Armistice, Britain's claims to be intervening in Russia as part of the wider conflict against German forces became obsolete. It was from this point that the debate surrounding Britain and its aims within Russia became one of the key political issues of the time. The question was now a clear one: if intervention had been just a part of a wider European conflict and not, as its detractors argued, a way in which to combat the growth of

160 Nicholas V. Riasanovsky & Mark D. Steinberg, *A History of Russia*, 7th Edition, Oxford, 2005
161 Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War*, p. 8
162 Moore, Mead, Jahns, *The History of the American Expedition Fighting the Bolsheviki*, pp. 47–50.

Bolshevism there, then why were British forces not only remaining but being reinforced in Russia?[163] The Conservative Party was split, with debates raging in the Cabinet and the House of Commons during the second half of 1918. It was the first clash in a battle over Bolshevism that would last until 1926, with two sides of the Cabinet coming to very different conclusions on how the threat to Britain should be countered.

Even before the Armistice, British relations with Russia had become strained. On the 31st of August 1918, an armed mob overran the British Embassy in Petrograd and murdered the Naval Attaché there, a Captain F.N.A Cromie.[164] This unprovoked attack forced Prime Minister Lloyd George, whose natural instincts were to avoid conflict and to maintain trade links with Russia, to issue a strong response: if full reparations were not received, the government would "make every effort to ensure that they (who were responsible) shall be treated as outlaws by the governments of all civilised nations and that no place of refuge would be available to them." Meanwhile, the War Office and Foreign Office chose to release a paper on the situation in Russia, which cited the risk of Bolshevism spreading towards the West "with its doctrine of irreconcilable class war" as a serious threat to national security.[165]

As Robert Cecil, who would be Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs until January 1919, stated in the House of Commons early in 1918, the battle lines had already been drawn, both by the actions of the Bolsheviks in Russia and their clear attempts to push for revolution throughout Europe:

> The Bolshevik Government has made no secret of its intense hostility to the government of this country. It has published attack after attack of the most violent kind on this country. It has made no secret of the fact that its policy is social revolution in all countries. If its envoys are going to advocate and promote social revolution in this country and by social revolution I mean what I say, and not constitutional change, it is the duty of the government to protect the people of this country against its advocacy, just as if it were undertaken by natives of this country.[166]

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163 Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War*, P. 59

164 Mr. Lindly to Mr. Balfour, September 6 1918, Report number 5, A Collection of Reports on Bolshevism in Russia, The Foreign Office, His Majesty' Stationary Office, London, 1919

165 Political Intelligence Department Foreign Office, The Growing Danger of Bolshevism in Russia, 25 October 1918, CAB 24/68/6

166 House of Commons Debate, 27 February 1918, Vol 103 cols 1405-522

Balfour, who was serving as foreign secretary, was one of the men who would be crucial in the debate on intervention, with his position changing over the course of the debate. In late 1918, he was clear in his view that British forces must remain in Russia and he gravitated towards Churchill and the Hardliners. This need for British Intervention was not only to act as a bulwark against Bolshevism but, in his view, primarily as part of a moral obligation to assist Britain's First World War allies, the White Russians.[167] In a Cabinet meeting on the implications of the Armistice and Russia, he declared that "if we now withdrew our forces from European and Asiatic Russia, we should suffer a serious loss of prestige, and should be letting down our friends."[168] However, unlike Churchill, he maintained from an early date that the most sensible way of doing this would be through funding and very limited use of manpower at key points.[169] He was also concerned with protecting the states surrounding Russia from any potential Bolshevik spread, especially the Baltic States, stating that Britain must stay watchful in protecting them.

Another figure of importance was Lord Milner, who in the early years of the debate on intervention also can be counted as a Hardliner, though again he is a complicated figure. A man with considerable loyalty towards Lloyd George, it was only his depth of feeling on the matter that pushed him towards intervention. After Brest-Litovsk and the killing of the Tsar, Milner's views had hardened and he became adamant that the Whites must be backed, stating that it would be both dishonourable and disloyal if Britain failed its wartime allies.[170] However, even at this early point, he opposed "a crusade against the Bolsheviks in areas where Bolshevism already prevailed".[171] He was largely therefore a Hardliner in these debates, advocating military action in Russia but not to the extent of Churchill's grand crusade.

An open letter to the press published on the 19th of December makes his views on the matter clear:

> How can we, simply because our own immediate purposes have been served, come away and leave them to the tender mercies of their and our enemies... It would be an abominable betrayal, contrary to every British instinct of honour and humanity... If the Allies were all to scramble out of Russia at

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167 War Cabinet minutes 18 October 1918, CAB 23/8/10

168 War Cabinet minutes, 18 October 1918, CAB 23/8/10

169 Max Egremont, *Balfour: A Life of Arthur James Balfour,* London, 1980, pp. 302-306: R.F Mackay, *Balfour: Intellectual Statesman*, 1985, p 319

170 John Marlow, *Milner: Apostle of Empire*, 1976, p. 264, Terence O'Brien, *Milner,* 1979, p.326

171 As seen in numerous correspondence see for example, Bodleian Oxford, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 111, 117, 118

> once, the result would almost certainly be that the barbarism, which at the present reigns in only part of that country, would spread over the whole of it.[172]

His view was clear: that troops should not stay longer than necessary but that due to wider concerns, such as those of empire, it was imperative that they stay until order was returned to Russia. In his words, "Were we to scramble out of Russia at once," the "barbarism" would spread across the country, threatening to engulf the nations around Russia and putting great strain on the resources of the British Empire.[173] He stated that, "the ultimate consequences of such a disaster cannot be foreseen […] but they would assuredly involve a far greater strain on the resources of the British Empire than our present commitments."[174]

In the final Armistice discussion in Cabinet on the 10th of November 1918, Lloyd George argued for peace with Germany as the only way of ensuring that Germany did not turn Bolshevik.[175] This was the discussion that opened up a much wider debate on the threat of Bolshevism to Europe, Britain herself, and what should be done to counter it. Field Marshall Henry Wilson (the Chief of the Imperial Staff who regularly attended Cabinet meetings) recalled the conversation in his diary: "Lloyd George informed the Cabinet that 'Clemenceau is afraid that Germany will break up and Bolshevism become rampant'. Lloyd George then asked me if I wanted this or would rather have an Armistice, and I unhesitatingly said Armistice. All the Cabinet agreed, our real danger now is not the Boches but Bolshevism."[176]

The threat was seen as being so dire that some in the Cabinet discussed avoiding a Russian power vacuum by using German troops to fight the Bolsheviks. On the eve of the Armistice, Milner and Henry Wilson told Colonel House that they both objected to total German demobilisation on the grounds that Germany might soon have to serve as Europe's bulwark against Bolshevism.[177] Churchill too argued that a new partnership with Germany should be explored based on a joint need to confront Bolshevism in Russia, stating that "it

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172 The Times, 19 December 1918
173 Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War*, p. 60
174 Cited in W.P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Armed Intervention in Russia, 1918-1922*, London, 1935, pp 135-7
175 John Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism and the Versailles Peace*, Princeton, 1966, p. 21
176 Major General Sir C.E Callwell, *Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries,Volume* 2, London, 1927, p. 146
177 Seymour, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, p. 116; Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism and the Versailles Peace*, p. 25

was important to get Germany on her legs again for fear of the spread of Bolshevism."[178] This was a recurring and expanding theme, with Churchill going on to share with the Cabinet his imagining of Germany playing her "full part" with the Allies in the "liberation and reconstruction" of Eastern Europe, and not merely acting as a bulwark against Communism, adding "what a splendid opportunity this would have been for Germany to avoid all humiliation in defeat and to slide by almost unconscious transition from cruel strife to natural co-operation with all of us."[179]

Another figure deeply concerned by the new post-war world confronting Whitehall was Lord Curzon. A diary entry shows how much uncertainty the new Europe held for many: "The world is unquiet. Uneasy symptoms are abroad. We hear the moaning of sick nations on their couches, and we listen to and witness the struggles of dying men."[180] These were views that, despite shared anti-Bolshevik sentiment among many Conservatives in the Cabinet, found no real levels of support, in part due to how the British public would perceive such an alliance after years of war. But despite the failure of this initial plan, the issue of Russia would, for Churchill, become an almost obsessive one. Alongside Balfour and Milner, Churchill believed strongly that Britain's former allies, the White Russians, must be supported in Russia. Using his role as Minister of Munitions, he made clear that the current government policy on the issue, to support the Whites economically but without resorting to any form of active warfare, was in his mind not fit for purpose.[181] With these three key Cabinet members, a new political faction was beginning to emerge: Hardliners on Bolshevism – men that believed only a strong response both at home and abroad could end the threat of Bolshevism.

Not for the first or last time, Winston Churchill, then Minister of Munitions, was to be the figurehead that the Hardliners rallied around. A maverick, loved and loathed in equal measure by his peers, he was indisputably a charismatic and often very effective political figure and a man whose views on the threat of Bolshevism were already deeply entrenched. He was a Liberal, and yet as 1924 would show, a man still very much in

178 War Cabinet minutes, 10 November 1918, CAB 23/14/45
179 War Cabinet minutes, 10 November 1918, CAB 23/14/45
180 The Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon Vol 1*, London, 1928, p. 236
181 Henry Pelling, *Winston Churchill*, London, 1974, p. 253

sympathy with the Conservative Party and a man well-known as a "hammer of the reds".[182] Indeed, such was his depth of feeling that to the modern observer, it verges on the hysterical, with Churchill announcing in one speech in 1919, for example, that: "Of all the tyrannies in history, the Bolshevik tyranny is the worst, the most destructive, and the most degrading."[183] He would go on to say that the Soviet Regime "consisted of a foul combination of criminality and animalism" and describe in typically emotive language how Lenin's return to Russia from exile in Switzerland had been "in a sealed truck like a plague bacillus."[184]

Alongside many of his senior colleagues, Churchill's view of Britain's obligation to her former allies, the White Russians, was equally strong. He would describe the events that had ripped away Tsarist Russia as the appearance of "an apparition with countenance different from any seen on earth (which now) stood in the place of an old Ally... a state without a nation, an army without a country, a religion without a god".[185] Despite being a Liberal, it was largely Tory backbenchers who rose to Churchill's rallying cry, showing the stark differences in the opinions of many Tories in the Cabinet and those on the green benches behind them. Led by men such as Cols Claude Lowther and Walter Guinness (a future Cabinet minister), Brigadier-General Page Croft and, they claimed, over 300 other backbenchers, it was a formidable force in Parliament.

It was Prime Minister Lloyd George and his Cabinet Allies, including Conservatives such as Austen Chamberlain, who were to form the opposition to Churchill and his plans for intervention. To them it was a case of understanding the evils of Bolshevism but also that it must be left to Russia to decide its own future – not to Allied intervention. This was a viewpoint centred as much around their realism in understanding that Britain did not have the power to decide an outcome in Russia as it was on their reluctance to push the nation towards another conflict. In this, they were joined by others, some of whom had previously spoken in favour of intervention, such as Cecil, who was clear that despite his obvious distaste at Bolshevism, Britain was in no economic position to battle it in a major conflict.[186] This more pragmatic political force faced an uphill battle in convincing rabidly anti-Bolshevik backbenchers to join them, but the combined energy of the Prime Minister and a number of key Conservative figures was to prove decisive in the upcoming parliamentary

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182 Stuart Ball, Churchill and the Conservative Party, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol 11, 2001, pp. 307-30

183 11 April 1919 quoted in Winston Churchill, *'The Aftermath, The World Crisis 1918-1928*, Macmillan, London, 1929, p. 73

184 Speech of 11 April 1919 quoted in Churchill, The Aftermath, p. 73

185 Cited in David Mitchell, *1919 Red Mirage*, London, p. 23

186 Cecil, Memorandum on Policy in Russia on Cessation of Hostilities, 20 October 1918, CAB 24/67/50

debates.

A key member of this group was Austen Chamberlain, seen by many as a future leader of the Conservative Party, and from January 1919 the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Indeed, such was his importance in the Cabinet that Churchill had hoped to bring him over to his side. This was a hope encouraged by Chamberlain's obvious revulsion at the on-going events in Russia, made clear in a letter to Lord Curzon on the need to present the British people with the terrible truth about the Bolshevik movement, "in order to galvanise public support for any necessary anti-Bolshevik measures taken while in government."[187] But, despite this, Chamberlain was at heart an economist and a man of great pragmatism. He was very wary of the big interventionist schemes pushed by Churchill, knowing that they were likely to, at best, offer limited success in a country that would close ranks against foreign invaders. Perhaps key to his thinking was that any such 'Grand Army' in Russia would cost Britain, both in stability and in cash, a great deal more than it could afford.[188] It was, along with a major role for Lloyd George, a debate that would come to be personified as a battle between these two men: Austen Chamberlain, the archetypal realist and cautious politician, and Winston Churchill, the ardent anti-Bolshevik, dramatic dreamer and gambler.

The first real clashes between the two groups post-Armistice were soon to come. Lord Milner had continued to focus on the matter of supporting the Whites and had been regularly reading War Office Reports and discussing them with Churchill, often annotating those that referred to the White Army. [189] Many of these reports were also being sent to the Cabinet as a whole.[190] He had also been meeting with the man on the ground, R. H. Bruce Lockhart, who represented the British Government in Moscow, to better understand the situation in Russia. As Lockhart's diaries show, "Milner though overwhelmed with work, often invited... and encouraged (Lockhart) to write memoranda on Russia."[191] Through Milner Churchill too began to see Lockhart as a means to an end, using his words to push for intervention – something sparked by a letter Lockhart had written to the Cabinet on the 7th of November stating that he believed that "the Allies should either mount a massive military expedition to over-throw Bolshevism (his preferred option) or come to terms

187 The Curzon Papers, A Chamberlain to Curzon, 8th Jan 1919, Curzon MSS, Eur F 112/209
188 Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain*, pp. 159-60
189 The Bodleian, Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 141
190 Bodleian Oxford, Milner Papers, telegrams on Russia, MS. Milner dep. 364 B
191 K. Young, (ed.), *Diaries of Sir R. Bruce Lockhart*, I, August 2nd 1918.

with it."[192]

Field Marshall Wilson was also firmly on Churchill's side and produced a War Office memo outlining three options: withdrawal and establishing a ring of safe states around Russia (he dismissed this as militarily impracticable); full intervention; and limited intervention with material and finance to the white Russians.[193] On the 13th of November, he made clear to the War Cabinet that, in his view, leaving Russia to itself would only allow the disease to take a firmer hold: "Bolshevism flourishes in rank soil, such as exists in Russia owing to complete isolation from the outside world for several years."[194] These arguments spilled over into the next day's meeting. Wilson, having discussed the memo with Foreign Office aides, stated his preference for full intervention and at the very least the third option of limited intervention in clear areas. Foreign Secretary Balfour agreed to Wilson's plan and supported limited intervention and White Army support; Secretary of State for War Milner also was in agreement. These men, though not as strongly opinionated as Churchill and Curzon, were therefore to form the initial band of Hardliners.[195] Chamberlain and Lloyd George continued to argue for moderation, while Bonar Law and Cecil remained seemingly silent.[196]

It is also worth noting that Secretary of State for India Montagu, too, was drafting memos on the situation in Russia, stating to the Cabinet on the 26th of November that Wilson was wrong and that any attempt to barricade the states near India could lead to greater problems and anti-British feeling. In his view, Turkey could be supported against Bolshevism and anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia supported – but any intervention was a mistake.[197] Austen Chamberlain and Lloyd George had another strong card to play: that public opinion around the country was showing that any grand schemes for Russia would have dire consequences at home. As the Ministry of Labour warned in a memo seen by Cabinet: "The support of the Russian Bolsheviks is a question transcending all others in its importance, especially for the Labour movement in this country."[198] Indeed, the situation was so dire that a separate memo on the consequences of intervention in Russia warned

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192 Circulated in the Cabinet as Lockhart, The Internal Situation in Russia, 7 November 1918, CAB 24/73/62

193 War Cabinet minutes, Wilson Memo, 'Our Present and Future Military Policy in Russia, 13 November 1918, CAB 24/70/11

194 War Cabinet Minutes, 13 November 1918, CAB 24/70/11

195 Clifford Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade: The British Invasion of Russia 1918-1920*, 2006, p. 78

196 War Cabinet Minutes, 14 November 1918, CAB 23/8/23

197 War Cabinet Minutes, Montagu Memo to Cabinet, 26 November 1918, CAB 24/70/93

198 G.H. Robert, Report from the Ministry of Labour for the week, 20 November 1918, CAB 24/70/80

that the only way to avoid Bolshevik unrest at home was a speedy withdrawal from all commitments there.[199]

In the Commons and Lords too, questions were being asked about what was going to happen in Russia. On the 18th of November, the government was asked in the Commons to describe its aims in Russia. Ian MacPherson, the Under-Secretary of State for War, replied as best he could (given that splits were ongoing) that he could not in the national interest give information. The matter was again raised in the Lords where Government spokesman Lord Cecil declared that the Government was not disposed to "entangle this country at the close of a great war in serious military operations." With no party line, this was surely a true reflection of his view.[200]

Despite the debates, in November British policy saw no real change. On the 23rd of December, in his first clear move against the Prime Minister, Churchill made it clear that he believed that the Cabinet needed to reach a definite decision. For him, the alternatives were whether the Bolsheviks should be left "to stew in their own juice" or whether the British should attempt to "break up their power". If action was to be undertaken, then he argued that it must be done thoroughly with large forces, abundantly supplied, and if that was to be done, the country must be stirred up and a large volunteer army collected. Churchill, continuing, declared: "We must make up our minds whether to allow Russians to murder each other without let or hinder, or in the name of order to interfere and do the job thoroughly".[201]

But the Cabinet remained deeply divided and no answer would come from these questions. The Hardliners had even lost the support of Balfour. Amazingly, perhaps, due entirely to his personal enmity for Curzon, Balfour had vocally supported the moderates later that month in a personal clash over Curzon's becoming Chairman of the Eastern Committee and his calls for Britain to occupy and protect Transcaucasia. Balfour and Curzon exchanged curt letters on the topic.[202] Balfour then attended the Committee to argue with Curzon on the 9th of December. Curzon stated, "How would you prevent them from being crushed by Russia unless you had a military force?", to which Balfour replied, "It would be folly, from a purely military point of view,

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199 G. N. Barnes, Memorandum, Allied Operations in Russia, 19 December 1918, CAB 24/72/14

200 Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade*, p. 80

201 All quotes taken from War Cabinet Conclusions, 23 December 1918, CAB 23/42/17

202 The Balfour Papers, letters between the two on the topic, and the wider argument on Russia, go from 1918 to as late as Febuary 1923, all in, MS/49734.

for us to try and keep a military force there".[203]

With no compromise in sight as the end of the year approached, the Prime Minister held a last Cabinet meeting in December before his planned departure for the Paris Peace talks. Within it was general agreement that the current Russian strategy was drifting and had the effect of "merely poking with sticks into the kennel to infuriate the dog."[204] Despite this, no universally acceptable solution could be found as both sides saw this middle ground as wholly wrong for the opposite reasons. Lord Curzon also fired a shot at Chamberlain, pointing out that though he understood the financial constraints that Britain faced, intervention was necessary, describing it as "like walling off a fire in a mine" and that it should be continued.[205] The Prime Minister, however, would not be moved, citing the lack of troops available, the nation's unwillingness to enter into further conflict, and the fear that Allied intervention may only serve to strengthen Bolshevism in Russia, making great use of the historical parallel that British support for a weak authoritarian force had only strengthened the Jacobins in Revolutionary France.[206]

With his trip to Paris looming, Lloyd George managed to secure a fragile agreement among a close majority of his colleagues: he would look for ways in which Britain's obligations in Russia could be reduced or shared, and had won approval to seek ways in which the Bolsheviks and Whites could be engaged in some form of peace talks.[207] It was far from what Churchill, Curzon and the Hardliners had hoped for, and though support for the White Armies would continue, the lack of provision for the use of British forces in the region led Churchill to argue that it was next to nothing. The arguments therefore were now certain to extend into 1919.

Early 1919: The debates in London and Prinkipo

As the Cabinet returned after Christmas, the debates within the government began in earnest. The election in December (with votes counted on the 28th to include those of serving soldiers) had seen a huge majority for

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203 Cabinet Archives, The Eastern Committee, 47th Meeting, 9 December 1918, CAB 27/24
204 War Cabinet Conclusions, 31 December 1918, CAB 23/42/20
205 War Cabinet Conclusions, 31 December 1918, CAB 23/42/20, see also Lloyd George, The Truth about the Peace Treaties, pp. 325-30
206 Imperial War Cabinet. Minutes, 31 December. 1918, CAB 23/42/20
207 Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism and the Versailles Peace*, p. 94

the Lloyd George Coalition, but with most of those gains going to the Tories. Bolshevism did not feature in any major speeches, nor did the Government's manifesto mention it once. Only the assertion that a vote for Coalition would keep Britain from Bolshevism and the Labour Party was heard in relation to the ongoing Cabinet debates.[208] But the election had not ended the debates or animosity now being seen in the Cabinet. General Wilson's anger at the Cabinet decision to maintain the coalition, and perhaps more wider frustrations, came to the fore, and he declared to a friend on the eve of the vote that "the bribery of L. G. at this election [was] simply disgusting. I won't vote tomorrow."[209]

In his new government, Lloyd George found himself with limited options, largely due to the comparatively small number of returning Liberal MPs compared to the Unionists in his Coalition. He was also now increasingly under pressure from the new formation of anti-Bolshevik unionists and Churchill himself. Perhaps due to this lack of choice, on the 10th of January Churchill was promoted to Secretary of State for War. It was a promotion that was not well received by a number of his coalition colleagues, with Leo Amery recording that the prospect of Churchill in such a position was not viewed with enthusiasm from war-weary colleagues and military figures. Amery stated to Lloyd George, "Don't put Churchill in the War Office. I hear from all sorts of quarters that the Army are terrified of the idea."[210] Even Hardliner and ally Wilson was shocked when Churchill told him that the offer had been mooted in later December: "Winston came to tell me that he was going to succeed Milner as War Minister. Whew!!" Three days later, he wrote, "it seems quite clear that Winston is going to succeed Milner and I have grave doubts about the situation."[211] Part of the issue was that Churchill remained in many ways an unpopular politician, especially in military matters – perhaps something that Lloyd George had hoped would help temper his experience and passion. He was remembered for the Dardanelles disaster, and some Tories had never forgiven him for crossing the floor 14 years earlier.

The press too were angry, with the *Morning Post* stating, "There is some tragic flaw in Mr Churchill which determines him on every occasion in the wrong course... it is an appointment which makes us tremble for the

208 Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade*, p. 80
209 General Callwell (Ed.) *The Diaries of Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson, Volume* II, 13 December 1918
210 Amery, *Diaries*, p. 248
211 Callwell, Wilson Diary, 16 and 19 December 1918

future."[212] Despite this concern from colleagues and the press alike, it would make no difference in Churchill's continued drive for intervention in Russia. For him, it seemed to become a personal battle, and his hatred of Bolshevism grew to almost pathological levels.[213] One fascinating insight into this strength of feeling comes again from the diaries of Sir Henry Wilson, who in January 1919 recorded Churchill telling the Prime Minister that "one might as well legalize sodomy as recognize the Bolsheviks", with Wilson concluding that "Winston [was] all against Bolshevism, and therefore, in this against Lloyd George."[214] The situation certainly had not been helped by the unrest ongoing in the armed forces (discussed later in this thesis), which Churchill saw as partly revolutionary but others saw as a reaction to the threat of a new war in Russia pushed by Churchill. Certainly, his friend Birkenhead tried to warn him, writing to him: "There is no doubt that a psychological tremor passed over our splendid army, which could not but be the cause of very profound anxiety."[215] Despite the reservations of his friends and the obvious public (and conscript) distaste for more conflict, Churchill still refused to back down.

In February, a new argument broke out when word of a secret plan to negotiate with the Bolsheviks seeped out. Lloyd George, with the support of Chamberlain and Bonar Law, had sought to bring the Whites and Reds to discussions on the island of Prinkipo and to thrash out a peace deal between them. This policy was named the Prinkipo Conference Plan after the island on which the discussions were planned to be held. The idea of including the Bolsheviks in discussions was a controversial one, but the Prime Minister had spoken and most, if not all, his opponents were therefore inclined to toe the party line. Even Lord Curzon, so clearly against the idea in Cabinet discussions, was forced to defend the policy to the House of Lords, stating:

> Suppose a powerful brigand captures an innocent victim, carries him off into captivity, and demands a large ransom for him; you do not because you enter into negotiations with him, because you consent to meet him, even because you consent to pay the price, recognise him as an honourable or respectable man – and it is exactly the same in the case of the Bolsheviks.[216]

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212 Morning Post, 11 January 1919
213 Pelling, *Churchil*l, p. 255
214 Callwell, *Diaries of Sir Henry Wilson*, 23 January 1919
215 Churchill College Cambridge, The Churchill Archives, CHAR 2/106, folio 178
216 House of Lords Debate, 11 February 1919, Vol 33, cols 9-56

Churchill, who felt both marginalised and betrayed by his colleagues' grudging acceptance of such a plan, was ominously quiet in the days that followed. However, in the end the argument was laid to rest by the very men whose inclusion had sparked it, as the Bolshevik leadership delayed and finally refused to meet with the Allies at Prinkipo. The Hardliners were furious. On the 11th of February 1919, Curzon gave a speech in the House of Lords that was aimed to force the Cabinet into action. Despite declaring that he supported the official party line regarding the Prinkipo Proposal, he nevertheless signalled his support for tougher measures, not least because of the threat posed at home as well as abroad:

> You have in Russia a Government, or that which called itself a Government - I am speaking of the Bolsheviks... It is pursuing with relentless ferocity its policy, which is to annihilate its enemies, to destroy the social order in Russia and to spread the tentacles of its poisonous influence throughout the world. There is no doubt that there is a Bolshevik element and tone of mind existing in this country. I expect that it is largely fostered by enemy propaganda. I expect that enemy influences are hard at work in this direction, and that it represents a deliberate, I wish it were an expiring, effort on the part of the enemy to cheat us of the spoils of the victory which we have won over him, and, if he perishes himself, to bring down the house of the Philistines about our head.[217]

Curzon had achieved two key things: he had subtly shown his support for some form of intervention in Russia while at the same time making the connection between Russian Bolshevism and the threat of domestic unrest and Communist subversion. His speech was met with support from many of those in the chamber, including the Marquess of Salisbury, who responded:

> I could not, of course, better the language which the noble Earl used with respect to the Bolshevik Government. He described quite fittingly what an awful form of Government it represents, and how terrible are the extremities to which it has descended: murder, cruelty, lust, every conceivable horror. I think the noble earl went rather far in absolutely excluding all possibility of intervention of any kind as an alternative. He and his Government may be driven to it. I do not mean for a moment that I suggest that we should take conscript Armies into Russia. I agree with him that such a policy is

[217] House of Lords Debate 11 February 1919, Vol 33, cols 9-56

absolutely out of the question. But intervention may take many forms.[218]

While some, such as Balfour, saw merit in the idea of talks, the rest of the Hardliners backed Churchill – as did the majority of the Conservative backbenchers who now made up a huge percentage of the Coalition.[219] In the end, however, the clash over the issue was over as the Bolsheviks refused to attend any such talks with the Whites. Lloyd George had a reprieve from the clash that looked sure to come over Prinkipo but just days after the debates on the issue stopped he was again fighting with the Hardliners in Cabinet over the issue of Russia. In the Cabinet meeting on the 12th of February, Churchill announced that he was still furious at the continued indecision of the government. Appealing to colleagues, he argued that the "wait and see" policy and the failed attempts at peace merely meant that the Bolsheviks were growing stronger and that the Whites, believing their allies had forsaken them, were losing ground.[220] Chamberlain responded, telling the Cabinet that he doubted any good could come from intervention and that Britain would have to sustain the whole and mighty cost.[221]

Lloyd George had by this point also pulled together a strong Cabinet alliance, including senior Conservatives Austen Chamberlain and Balfour, who had been won over by Chamberlain's assessment of the economic realities. Milner too had largely left the Hardliners' cause, perhaps due to his distractions as new Secretary of State for the Colonies and his commitments at the Peace Conference in Paris. Chamberlain had a strong message that large-scale mobilisation for war in Russia was not only economically unfeasible but would fan the flames of revolution in a war-weary Britain already plagued by demobilisation strikes and workers' unrest.[222] Such were Chamberlains and Lloyd George's concerns that, in a letter to his friend George Riddell, the Prime Minister remarked that Churchill, in his attempts to conduct a war against the Bolsheviks, "would cause a revolution!"[223] Chamberlain went on to make it clear that, even had the Cabinet decided to send more troops, there was simply insufficient manpower available for such a venture.

Churchill and his Cabinet allies had been outmanoeuvred and half-heartedly agreed that the only way

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218 House of Lords Debate 11 February 1919, Vol 33, cols 9-56
219 Egremont, *Balfour*, P.305
220 Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War,* p. 89
221 Gilbert, *Churchill*, iv, p. 240
222 Callwell, Wilson Diaries II, p. 169 *and Thompson, Russia, Bolshevism and the Versailles Peace*, p. 134
223 John McEwen Editor, *The Riddell Diaries: A Selection*, 1986, p.257 entry for 16 Feb 1919

available to combat Bolshevism immediately was to merely supply White Russians with materiel and money – a plan that Churchill condemned as little more than a "choice between forlorn hope... and a certain disaster."[224] In a parting shot, he also made clear the risks that he believed the Government was taking by allowing Bolshevism to continue unopposed in Russia, describing a nightmare vision of a Bolshevik Russia allied with Germany and Japan: "The Russian situation must be judged as part of the great quarrel with Germany, and unless we are able to go to the support of the Russians there was a possibility of a great combination from Yokohama to Cologne in hostility to France, Britain and America."[225] Considering his assertions in previous debates, that Germany's role lay in defending the West from Bolshevism and should be rearmed, it was a curious new tack, although perhaps not surprising when Churchill's form as a man willing to change the facts, as long as the argument is won, is considered.

Austen Chamberlain now, with the tacit approval of the Prime Minister, began to try and turn key figures in the Conservative Party away from Churchill, arguing once again that intervention was financially unaffordable, militarily impossible and socially irresponsible. This even led to him demanding the right to scrutinize the War Office's expenditure.[226] It was these realities that led so many of Chamberlain's colleagues – including those who, like Milner and Balfour, had earlier been hawks on the issue – to trust his judgement, much to the ire of Churchill. Arthur Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, had been torn between his instincts and the straitened circumstances in which Britain found herself, but was now forced to admit that Britain was not ready for war. Soon even Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson was also forced into adopting a position that went against his natural instincts, agreeing that, instead of pursuing intervention, a limited policy towards Bolshevik Russia was the only real course of action available. With all of these key figures changing position due to the arguments put forward by Chamberlain, it seemed that Churchill's dreams of Russian intervention were coming to an end.

To make things worse for Churchill, by February 1919 the argument over Russia had also become a truly national issue. Mass protests were organised by the trade union-linked 'Hands Off Russia' campaign group across the country, and there was large-scale unrest in the armed forces, due in part to the threat of further

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224 War Cabinet minutes, 12 February 1919, CAB. 23/9/18

225 War Cabinet minutes, 13 February 1919, CAB. 23/19/19

226 A Chamberlain to Churchill, 5 Feb 1919, cited Gilbert, Churchill iv, 1, p. 513

service in Russia, which had seen thousands of troops marching with banners declaring 'We Will Not Fight In Russia' and demanding demobilisation.[227] By this point, Cabinet discussions on the British commitments to Russia and the White Armies were occurring almost weekly. The stances of the key figures in the government were now clear and unbending. One side, personified by Churchill, kept up the now-familiar requests for further military action, especially in the north of the country, focusing on the strategic importance of Archangel. The other, represented by the Prime Minister and Austen Chamberlain, warned of the cost of such schemes and the risk of "pouring money in this way into the Russia sieve."[228]

It was here, on the issue of money, that the Prime Minister was winning the argument. Edwin Montagu, Secretary of State for India, had even written to him in February to back him, making the same points that he and Chamberlain now raised. On Russian Bolshevism, Montagu had stated: "It seems to me there is only one way of dealing with this, if we want to deal with it, namely to declare war on it and beat it. This is a formidable undertaking, costing men which no country has to spare, and money of which we need every penny." He then discusses the cost and difficulty of implementing Churchill's plan for a volunteer army. He concluded that the best course of action was to arm the White Russians and wait to see the outcome. He said: "I would confine myself to this policy, not because I am not as anxious as anybody in the world to see the end of the terrible menace of Bolshevism, but because I believe that those who want to fight it in Russia are, against their will, bringing it much closer to home."[229]

With the tide turning to the pragmatists, Austen Chamberlain began to flex his political muscles, telling Parliament that no good could come of further intervention in Russia and that the decision of the US to rule it out meant that the cost of such a campaign would fall squarely on the shoulders of Britain and France alone.[230] Due to this, and to his overall belief that intervention was doomed to failure, he even began, in March 1919, to argue for some form of agreement with the Bolsheviks, which would allow the British forces in Archangel to be safely returned from Russia.[231] It was a strong point and a clear continuation of Lloyd

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227 Oswald Garnson Villard, *Fighting Years, Memoirs of a Liberal Editor, New York*, 1938, pp. 382-83

228 Cited in Mitchell, *'Red Mirage'*, p. 234

229 Taken from E.S Montague letter to Lloyd George, read aloud in Cabinet meeting – Cabinet minutes, 14 Feb 1919, CAB 24/75/61

230 Dutton, *'Austen Chamberlain'* p. 159 and Martin Gilbert, *Churchill the Official Biography, Volume IV. The Stricken World, 1916-1922*, London, 1966, p. 240

231 Gilbert, *Churchill IV*, pp. 271 - 2

George's statement in the same month that "our principle ought to be Russia must save herself! Nothing else would be of the slightest use to her."[232] In the House of Commons, with rumour of such a change in government policy in the air, there was widespread anger. Churchill decided to force the issue upon the house, hoping to show the strength of support for an aggressive policy on Russia that existed across the Conservative benches.

Churchill presented his army estimates on the 3rd of March 1919 and made the debate an opportunity to once again push for intervention. He declared that the nation was "half way between war and peace" already and that was why he believed an enormous budget for an army of 2,500,000 men was needed. On the issue of troops in Russia, he stated, "We must look to the House of Commons, to the public generally, and to the newspapers... we must look at them to support us in everything the military authorities think it requisite and necessary to do to support those men."[233] It was one of the strongest cards he could play against the Cabinet moderates, with backbencher after backbencher from the Tory ranks standing to call for intervention and denounce the Bolshevik regime as "murders of defenceless people", and a "government of bloodthirsty barbarians". Furthermore, warning after warning came that without intervention "the whole of Europe is likely to be infected and the fall of civilisation will be almost complete".[234] The exchange continued two days later in a debate on 'War Indemnities', where despite speeches by the Prime Minister, Austen Chamberlain and Sir Edward Shortt, the situation in Russia took centre stage.[235] More and more backbench voices were added to the clamour for intervention, and more and more were raised in support of the Secretary for War, Winston Churchill. The trend continued throughout the month of March, coming to a head at the debate on 'Recognising General Kolchak's Government'.[236]

At the same time, Churchill was pushing for a decision in the Cabinet, hoping to use the power of his backbench support as leverage in getting an aggressive policy on Russia agreed. He began at the meeting of the 4th of March, the day after his first push in the Commons. Here Lloyd George was again pressured for a

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232 Lloyd George to Philip Kerr, 19 Feb. 1919 Papers of Philip Kerr, 11th Marquis of Lothian, Lothian Muniments, National Archives of Scotland, cited in Toye, Lloyd George and Churchill, p. 201

233 House of Commons Debate, 3 March 1919 Vol 113 cols 69-183

234 Taken from the speeches made by Lieutenant-Colonel Guinness and Lieutenant-Colonel Archer-Shee, which are representative of numerous speeches by Conservative backbenchers at the debate. See, HC Debate, 03 March 1919, Vol 113, cols 91-8 and cols 131 – 139.

235 House of Commons Debate, 5 March 1919 Vol 113, cols 529-60

236 House of Commons Debate, 27 March 1919 Vol 114 cols 750-60

policy decision by Churchill and the Second Sea Lord, who declared that the navy believed that reinforcements were necessary in North Russia.[237] But Lloyd George, supported by Chamberlain and other key figures, now pushed back, stating that withdrawal and funding of the White Armies was the only feasible policy. Foreign Secretary Curzon found himself in a difficult position and in the meeting seemed to demur to the demands of the Prime Minister, thus splitting the two key figures within the Hardliners' ranks.[238] However, in a smaller meeting on the 6th of March, unattended by Lloyd George, Curzon declared that despite the new policy of withdrawal, he was sympathetic to a new plan articulated by Churchill. This would put to one side the orders to pull out and continue with a plan to supply a 2,000-man military mission to Denikin and similar numbers to Kolchak.[239]

Even with this support, however, Churchill felt betrayed – furious at what he saw as a huge strategic error. He is recorded by H. A. L. Fisher, Education Secretary, as stating, "After conquering all the Huns – tigers of the world – I will not submit to being beaten by the baboons."[240] Churchill now wrote to Lloyd George, who was in Paris, a long and careful letter summarising the War Cabinet's decisions. However, in doing so he made it clear that what had been agreed, though a withdrawal, also meant that there was flexibility on troop movement for around six months, and that aggressive action could be taken to secure the withdrawal and – critically – that Churchill had the freedom "to make whatever military arrangements are necessary". It was a freedom that he would use to the full for the next five months.[241]

However, despite this limited victory Churchill had not given up the hope of still achieving wider intervention. On the 14th of March, he wrote to Lloyd George complaining, "You and President Wilson have, I fear, definitely closed your minds on this subject and appear resolved to let Russian affairs take their course."[242] He then made the same statement to the War Cabinet on the 17th of March: "It was idle to think we should escape by sitting still and doing nothing. Bolshevism was not sitting still!"[243] This is something in which Churchill believed he was proved right with the Communist seizure of power in Hungary days later.

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237 War Cabinet Conclusion, 4 March 1919, CAB 23/15/6
238 War Cabinet Conclusion, 4 March 1919, CAB 23/15/6
239 War Cabinet Conclusions, 6 March 1919, Cab 23/9/29
240 Gilbert, *Churchill*, p. 275
241 Gilbert, *Churchill*, Appendix 2
242 Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade*, p. 155
243 War Cabinet conclusion, 17 March 1919, CAB 23/44B/29

But despite his continued persistence in pushing for intervention, it seemed that the economic, social and defence arguments put forward by Chamberlain and Lloyd George were too strong, and the Cabinet still refused to fully endorse Churchill or put any real pressure on Lloyd George to change tack. It seemed to many that Churchill was a man obsessed and blinded to the full picture, as his friend the journalist Henry Massingham put it in a letter: “That with [all] your gifts you should start again this crazy game of war, when for years every country will be hanging on by its eyelids to mere existence, is more than I can understand”.[244]

Despite Churchill's success in whipping up backbench support, Lloyd George and Chamberlain refused to budge. Yet despite this, many Conservatives continued to push for increased intervention and in doing so were led by Churchill. Such was his intransigence that it was here that Lloyd George pondered if it was bordering on the genetic, wondering if “his ducal blood revolted against the wholesale elimination of the Grand Dukes in Russia.”[245] As we have discussed, it was in fact a much more complicated matter for Churchill than that.

The Paris Peace Talks

As the debates raged in London, on the continent the leaders of the Allied nations were meeting to discuss the future of post-war Europe. The Paris Peace Conference began in January 1919 and continued throughout that year. Despite the focus on Germany and Austro-Hungary, the issue of Bolshevik Russia was also to be discussed. It seemed clear to the British Prime Minister that, as in Britain, the overwhelming mood at the conference was one of avoiding another war.

At the last 1918 Imperial War Cabinet meeting in December, attended by key War Cabinet figures and Commonwealth leaders, Cecil took the opportunity to speak out in favour of the Czechs and the danger of Bolshevik expansion – a point Churchill used to emphasise his view that any settlement with Russia to defend such nations would have to be imposed on her by force, telling the room that if the Bolsheviks refused to negotiate, then they should be informed that the Allies “would use force to restore the situation

244 H.W. Massingham to Winston Churchill, 16 March 1919, M. Glibert, Winston S. Churchill, iv, CV, 2, p. 587
245 David Lloyd George, *the Truth About The Peace Treaties, London*, 1938, vol. I, p. 325

and set up a democratic government."[246] It was clear, he told the Prime Minister, that if the Russian problem was not dealt with, we would "come away from the Peace Conference rejoicing in a victory which was no victory, and a peace which was no peace."[247]

Lloyd George travelled to Paris in an optimistic mood. The leaders of the Allied nations, intent on establishing the framework for a post-war continent, were largely focused on the fate of the defeated German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, but the situation in Russia was also on the agenda. Lloyd George, representing Britain and also her empire, joined the discussion on Russia following the same arguments as he had in the House of Parliament, rejecting any policy of mass intervention and instead focusing on limited financial support for the beleaguered White Russian forces. These were not only his own personal views but also those of the Commonwealth Dominions and India, who had poured so much into the European conflict with the leaders of these nations having met regularly with Lloyd George in Imperial War Cabinet meetings. He also knew that with Balfour and Milner, and at times Churchill, all having roles to play in Paris, the talks should signal an end to their active involvement in the debates around intervention in Westminster. This was certainly true for Balfour and to some extent Milner; however, with Churchill it was to prove a miscalculation.[248]

In the most recent Imperial War Cabinet meeting, the Prime Minister was met by strong voices, especially from Canada and Australia, urging him to end any form of intervention in the Russian Civil war. This included calls for a withdrawal of the small force of Allied troops in the region and even the end of any form of financial support to loyalist forces. It was also here that the idea for Prinkipo had originally come, with a call for some limited Bolshevik involvement in the Peace Conference to ensure that these aims could be met.[249] Lloyd George would not endorse such strong measures himself, but his opposition to any grand scheme in Russia was clear for all to see. In Paris, his views held weight among the other leaders, but more importantly the American Congress and President Wilson himself were also strongly opposed to involvement in any new European conflict. It was only Clemenceau, the French President, who would argue for increased

246 Minutes from Imperial War Cabinet, 47th Meeting, 30 December 1918, CAB 23/42/19
247 Minutes from Imperial War Cabinet, 47th Meeting, 30 December 1918, CAB 23/42/19
248 Mackay, *Balfour*, p.319
249 Recorded in 'Diary Entry for 19 January 1919; Wiseman Mss, Yale University Library, cited from Ullman, Britain and the Russian Civil War, p. 106

intervention, but even he was tempered by the huge rebuilding project that lay before him after years of warfare within French territory.

Though Lloyd George had been minded to fully endorse the views of his Imperial Cabinet and call for an end to all involvement in Russia, he had come to Paris with a plan of limited intervention continuing. This compromise was down to two factors: the importance of maintaining a strong working relationship with the French President, and perhaps more importantly the worrying possibility of a Cabinet split if Conservative politicians saw him as too soft on Bolshevism. Bonar Law, the leader of the Conservative Party and close friend of the Prime Minister, had cautioned him of a potential break if all aid was withdrawn from the White Armies – something that had led an infuriated Lloyd George to respond that, "If that is the case, the government had better be broken."[250] In Paris, this pressure continued to build on the Prime Minister, whose agitation with his coalition allies was growing by the day.

The situation worsened when, in a further moment of pique at Law's warning, the Prime Minister assembled the British Empire Delegation in Paris to prove to the Hardliners who had accompanied him that there was no support for intervention among them. Once assembled, he asked each leader in turn if they would provide troops for any Russian venture – as he expected, the answer was a resounding no.[251] When Balfour had attempted to intervene to reiterate the importance of supporting Britain's allies in Russia, Lloyd George denied the existence of any such obligation: "We had gone there to fight the Germans, not the Bolsheviks. If we were going to continue, we must do it to the extent of many millions."[252] It was an argument that seemed to signal the end of any debate on the issue, and one reiterated in London by Austen Chamberlain soon afterwards. In the face of such hostility from both the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, Churchill now once again rose to the fore. He was convinced that the peace talks had given the Prime Minister an opportunity to gain support for collective intervention, undoubtedly with visions of a European Crusade in mind and British troops fighting alongside French, American, Italian and Japanese forces in Russia. To avoid accusations of disloyalty, he claimed that a negotiated settlement was now his aim too but that, unless the Allies were seen

250 Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War,* p. 107
251 British Empire Delegation, Paris, 2nd minutes, 20 January 1919, FO 374/22
252 British Empire Delegation, Paris, 2nd minutes, 20 January 1919, FO 374/22

as committed to fight, then the Bolsheviks would not have need of one.[253] Robert Cecil had even raised his head above the parapet – a rare occurrence after his decision to bend to Chamberlain's economic argument – and warned again of the potential for Bolshevik attacks on Poland and Romania should the allies pull out of Russia.[254]

It had therefore come as a blow for Churchill to realise that the Prime Minister would not be putting such a scheme up for discussion in Paris. Therefore, in February 1919, while Lloyd George was back in London, Winston Churchill, due in Paris for a series of meetings, took the extraordinary step to use his visit to push his plan without the approval of the Prime Minister or Cabinet. He arrived in the French capital clutching plans that his War Office had drawn up for full-scale military intervention under his arm. His intention was to put his idea to President Wilson, with or without the support of the Prime Minister, and hope that by gaining American support, the opposition of European nations would soften. He told those whom he met that "unless Russia (cleared of Bolshevism) formed a living part of Europe… and a friend of the allied powers, there was neither peace nor victory."[255] His war mongering was described by Hankey as "Churchill at his worst".[256] It seemed to his critics strikingly similar to his actions before the Dardanelles campaign, and perhaps more dangerous – a forceful eloquent battering ram call-for-action at a time when most of the Cabinet were preoccupied with other matters.[257]

Churchill's plan was a simple one: a last ultimatum would be sent to the Bolsheviks, demanding they come to the negotiating table – something he actually sent, in language that would almost certainly be rejected. He then informed the Allied leaders:

> In anticipation of the Soviet Government refusing to accept the allied terms and continuing hostilities, it is suggested that suitable machinery should be set up forthwith to consider the possibilities of joint military action by the Associated Powers acting in conjunction with the

253 Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War*, p. 119
254 Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War*, p. 119
255 M. Hankey, *Supreme Command 1914-1918 – Supreme Control at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, 1963*, pp. 69-70
256 Hankey, *Supreme Command*, pp. 67-73
257 Norman Rose, *Churchill: An Unruly Life*, 2009, p.145

independent border states and pro-ally governments in Russia.[258]

This would then be the start of the second part of his plan: joint full-scale intervention in Russia by the Allies in order to establish a democratic government there, with both military and political forces organised and led by an Allied Council (tantamount to a War Council) – a plan that Cabinet Secretary Maurice Hankey called a "definite war scheme."[259]

With some difficulty, Churchill gained an audience with the US President, using it to propose his plan for joint intervention. President Wilson was personally unconvinced by such a grand and expensive plan, but under the bombardment of Churchill's arguments, he did agree to follow the decision of the other leading states when it came to Russia. Later that evening, after dining with Churchill, Henry Wilson, the Chief of the British Imperial Staff, noted in his diary that they had agreed to look the next day at the establishment of a War Council to examine sending material and men to Russia.[260] With the President's departure the following day, Churchill was determined use the limited discussion he had with him as the basis for a new push on the other Allied Leaders to secure forces for intervention. For the days following his meeting with the President, Churchill stuck to this plan, pushing the French and other nations' delegations to consider supporting a grand scheme of joint allied forces in Russia. His confidence in success had been boosted by the American leader's departure from Paris and Lloyd George's commitments at home keeping him away from such negotiations. But such grand schemes could not be kept from the Prime Minister forever.

When the news of Churchill's negotiations reached London, Lloyd George and his Cabinet allies were furious. Though later the Prime Minister acknowledged that Churchill had "adroitly seized the opportunity presented by the absence of President Wilson and myself to go over to Paris and urge his plans with regard to Russia", at the time he was not so understanding.[261] Churchill, realising the mood in Whitehall, sent a series of telegrams to the Prime Minister outlining his plan for an Allied Council. But as the full details of Churchill's plans came to light, the Prime Minister became incandescent: "Winston is in Paris. He wants to

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258 Neal Petersen and William Slany, *Foreign Relations, Paris Peace Conference Documents*, vol. IV, Washington, 1943, pp 173-74

259 Hankey, *Supreme Command*, p. 70

260 C.E Callwell, Field Marshall *Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries'*, London, 1927, Diary, entry for 14th February 1919

261 Lloyd George, *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol.I, p. 368

conduct a war against the Bolsheviks. That would cause a revolution! Our people would not permit it."[262]

A letter was sent to Churchill in strong language:

> Am very alarmed at your second telegram about planning a war against the Bolsheviks. The Cabinet have never authorised such a proposal. They have never contemplated anything beyond supplying Armies in anti-Bolshevik areas...
>
> I beg you not to commit this country to what would be a purely mad enterprise out of hatred of Bolshevik principles. An expensive war against Russia is a way to strengthen Bolshevism in Russia and create it at home. We cannot afford the burden. Chamberlain tells me we can hardly make both ends meet on a peace basis even at the present rate of taxation and if we are committed to a war against a continent like Russia, it is a direct road to bankruptcy and Bolshevism on these islands...
>
> I also want you to bear in mind the very grave labour position in this country. Were it known that you had gone over to Paris to prepare a plan of war against the Bolsheviks, it would do more to incite organised labour that anything I can think of; and what is worse, it would throw into the arms of extremists a very large number of thinking people who now abhor their methods.
>
> Please show these telegrams to the Foreign Secretary.[263]

Churchill, now forced onto the defensive, declared that such an attitude implied that the Prime Minister did not trust him and that it allowed foreign powers to see how divided the British Government was.[264] At the next council session, Churchill pressed for his plan to be committed to by the government and the allied nations. However, much to his chagrin, it soon became obvious that both the Cabinet and the Dominion leaders were against such wide-scale intervention. It was decided that any such Allied Council would only

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262 Riddell, *Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary*, p. 21

263 Lloyd George, *Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Vol. I, pp, 371-72

264 Kerr to Lloyd George, memorandum, 17th February 1919; printed in Lloyd George, Truth about the Peace Treaties, pp, 372-74

exist as a group investigating how the Allies could help and supply the White Armies in Russia.[265] More bad news for Churchill arrived later that week as President Wilson, on hearing of the on-going debates, took a firmer stance: no American troops or material would be sent to Russia. Balfour, who had again been wavering, then turned against Churchill and in one move ended the stalemate in the Cabinet. Churchill's grand plan for mass intervention in Russia was now dead.[266]

Upon his return to London, Churchill made clear to the Prime Minister that he saw the lack of intervention as a grave error, and even a failure in duty to the nation. In one letter, he described it as a case of "altogether failing to address your mind to the real dangers that are before us."[267] Later, he went on to describe the gradual withdrawal of British and Allied forces from Russia as "the steady degeneration of so many resources and powers which, vigorously used, might entirely have altered the course of events (in Russia)."[268] Other Hardliners were also furious at the way in which their plans had been dismissed, believing that had Churchill been given some backing, he may have succeeded in gathering allies in Paris. General Wilson, for example, stated to a military colleague after hearing that Lloyd George had denounced Churchill's plans that "I think this is the greatest depth of impotence I have ever seen the frocks fall to."[269]

Despite this, Lloyd George too felt betrayed, but despite his fury was still stuck between his core belief of ending all involvement in Russia, the nature of the coalition, and the largely Tory Cabinet calls for intervention. His position was a difficult one: leading a Conservative-dominated coalition who were keen to take action against the Bolsheviks, but responding to an enlarged electorate and angry working class who wanted no part in any conflict – especially one against the Bolsheviks. He and Austen Chamberlain had genuine cause for concern at Britain's post war economic position and demanded Churchill at the very least cost his various plans for intervention.[270] However, these concerns were to have no impact on the Secretary for State for War, who would return to London angry at the failure of his mission and determined to continue the fight for intervention.

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265 British Empire Delegation, Paris 8th Minutes, 17 February 1919, FO 374/22
266 Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War*, p. 127
267 WSC to DLG, 21 Feb 1919, cited in Churchill, The World Crisis IV: The Aftermath, London, 1929, p. 550
268 WSC to DLG, 15 March 1919, cited in Churchill, The Aftermath, p. 586
269 Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade*, p.104
270 Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade*, p. 105

March 1919–1920: Post-Paris debates and an end to intervention

In Parliament, the news of Churchill's plan being denounced was met by many Conservative backbenchers with anger. Churchill now largely focused on harnessing backbench and grassroots support for his scheme as a means of influencing the Prime Minister. In March, he complained to Lord Curzon that the lack of public knowledge on the atrocities committed by the Bolsheviks was a major block to his hopes for intervention: "In the absence of a true view about the Russian situation, I find a difficulty in supplying the necessary reinforcements for Archangel and Murmansk; public opinion is not sufficiently instructed."[271] With British intervention so unpopular with the public, he began to push again for a softer peace treaty with Germany on the grounds that she sent forces into Russia – a policy he described as "Kill the Bolshie, Kiss the Hun."[272]

With peace talks ongoing in Paris, this was one issue that split the Cabinet – just what should be done with Germany? Here the Hardliners themselves seemed split on what to do, with many of the most rabid anti-Communists increasingly lenient on Germany, while members with a more traditional Conservative foreign policy viewpoint were less so, with the traditional Diehards such as Curzon arguing to punish Germany for more traditional geopolitical reasons.[273] However, Churchill, Milner, Birkenhead, Cecil and Wilson did not, partly for fear of too harsh a treaty creating a new anger and future war with Germany, and partly to maintain the European status quo, largely due to Bolshevism and the risk of it spreading.

Churchill was increasingly concerned with the harsh measures that the Paris Conference were close to agreeing against Germany, as he argued that a weak Germany would be at risk from the spread of Bolshevism.[274] Writing to Lloyd George, he made his views on the matter clear: "Peace with the German people, war on the Bolshevik tyranny, willingly or unavoidably, you have followed something very near the reverse."[275]

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271 Churchill to Curzon, 28 March 1919; Curzon Papers, Mss, box 65
272 Gilbert, *Winston. S. Churchill, vol. IV*: 1916-1922, p. 278
273 Inbal Rose, *Conservationism and FP during the Lloyd George Coalition 1918-1922* – p. 38
274 Richard Toye, *Lloyd George and Churchill, Rivals for Greatness,* London, 2008, p. 204
275 WSC to DLG, 24 March 1920, cited in Churchill, The Aftermath , p. 1053

In March, Milner warned a friend that "unless terms are far more moderate... we shall go to disaster."[276] Fisher, the Liberal President of the Board of Education, recorded that Birkenhead, Churchill, Cecil, Wilson and interestingly Chamberlain (seemingly in agreement with the Hardliners) all privately condemned the treaty for its harshness, blaming a French lust for revenge, and "urged that it should be modified."[277]

With their hopes seemingly dashed for a strong German block to contain Russia, it seemed to the Hardliners now up to Britain to deal with the situation. Cabinet on the 31st of March saw Lord Curzon argue for a delay in any planned withdrawal from Archangel, stating that troops were needed in the key ports as well as funding for the Whites. Austen Chamberlain, now back on the side of the Prime Minister, argued back and hard, stating the cost of the plan and that Curzon's view that withdrawal would lead to collapse of White armies was incorrect. The majority of Cabinet remained quiet until Churchill arrived late to push back against Chamberlain.[278] They were unsuccessful with Chamberlain pushing ahead with Lloyd George's decision and the Hardliners too weak in Cabinet to properly oppose it.

It seemed as if, on all fronts, Churchill's grand vision of war, or at the very least a military barrier, against Bolshevism was crumbling. But on the first week of April, he gained a big boost as the Foreign Office published a Parliamentary Paper entitled, *A Collection of Reports on Bolshevism in Russia*.[279] A report on the crimes committed by the Bolsheviks in Russia, now considered a wild piece of propaganda constructed from largely second-hand accounts, it was at the time enough to re-energise backbenchers who, despite their actions in the chamber throughout March, feared that the argument had already been lost. Indeed, it is now known that Churchill and Curzon were both in contact to help get the white paper on Bolshevik atrocities published as pure propaganda to support their plans.[280] On the 2nd of April, Sir Samuel Hoare asked if rumours of a peace offer from Lenin were true, urging the government not to reply if so. He was reassured by Bonar Law that there was no such offer.[281] But the debate would soon reignite.

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276 Milner Papers, Mss dep 46 (141): Milner to Bishop H. Barnes, 4 March 1919
277 British Library, Fisher (H.A.L Fisher Papers) 14/69: Fisher Diary, 31 May 1919
278 Cabinet Conclusions, 31st March 1919, CAB 23/9/39
279 The Foreign Office, *A Collection of Reports on Bolshevism in Russia'*, London, 1919
280 Kinvig, *Churchill's Crusade*, p. 157
281 House of Commons Debate, 9 April 1919, Vol 114, cols 1327-30 and 1333-34

On the 9th of April, the White Paper was debated in the Commons and speaker after speaker made clear their views. As one stated to the backbench Tories, "Bolshevism in its working stands for anarchy, stands for despotism, stands for the enslavement of the working classes, stands for murder, pillage, rapine, lust, every conceivable crime". It was implied that it would be "a moral crime upon his soul as would be the making of any treaty with these murderers and villains".[282] The atrocities were the focus of many of the speeches; Clement Edwards MP told the moderates in the chamber to "just study the White Book which was issued by the Government two days ago", advising that they will find there "that to recognise the Lenin regime is to give recognition to anarchy, to mad anarchy, to wicked cruelty." Another backbencher talked of "Chinese executioners [who] saw asunder his victims and gouge out their eyes".[283] Their overall view was clear, as Walter Guinness stated: "You can no more make a treaty with Bolshevism or confine it not to spread into other countries than you can make a treaty with a house on fire."[284] It was down to the Home Secretary to defend the Cabinet's decision, declaring that he knew nothing of a peace offer, making clear the moderate Cabinet's arguments on the matter and appealing to the many MPs who were undecided on the matter. Despite this, the Hardliners' power among the backbenchers was made explicitly clear when following the debate over 300 backbenchers signed a resolution against any form of recognition or peace with the Bolshevik regime:

> We the undersigned, learn with great concern that there is a proposal before the Peace Conference to recognise the Bolshevist Government of Moscow, involving also the recognition of Russians as subjects of that government, and urge the British Plenipotentiaries to decline any such recognition.[285]

The anger of the Conservative backbenchers seemed to have little effect on the Prime Minister, but the largely Tory Cabinet was listening, and Winston Churchill was able to once again take the reins of the pro-intervention factions that existed there. It was the Prime Minister's absence while he returned to negotiations in Paris that provided Churchill with the platform to push his views to the British electorate. In April 1919, Winston Churchill was invited to the Aldwych Club and it was here that he decided to publicly set out his

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282 House of Commons Debate, 9 April 1919, Vol 114 cols 2170-2173
283 House of Commons Debate, 9 April 1919, Vol 114 cols 2141-2151
284 House of Commons Debate, 9 April 1919, Vol 114 cols 2155-2162
285 The Times, 10 April 1919

position on intervention in Russia – a speech that both stated his intent to continue the conflict with Russian Bolshevism and one that reignited the idea of bringing Germany back into the international fold to help with such a war. It was a seemingly desperate attempt to put intervention back on the table. He claimed that:

> "The atrocities by Lenin and Trotsky are incomparably more hideous... than any for which the Kaiser himself is responsible... Every British and French soldier lost last year was really done to death by Lenin and Trotsky, not in a fair way but by the treacherous desertion of an ally without parallel in the history of the world. A way of atonement is open to Germany. By combating Bolshevism, by being the bulwark against it, Germany may take the first step toward ultimate reunion with the civilised world".[286]

In Paris, Lloyd George dined with Bonar Law and Riddell. Upon learning of Churchill's speech, he fell into a rage, both at its content and at Churchill's continuing stubborn refusal to drop the matter of intervention. He fumed to Riddell that, "in certain moods he (Churchill) is dangerous. He has Bolshevism on the brain. Now he wants to make a treaty with the Germans to fight the Bolsheviks. He wants to employ German troops, and he is mad for operations in Russia."[287] Riddell himself added to his diary the next day about Churchill, "In certain moods he is dangerous. He has Bolshevism on the brain... He is mad for operations in Russia."[288] Lloyd George later was recorded stating to colleagues that "Winston's anti-Bolshevik obsession had done him great harm". He went on to state his belief that Churchill was becoming delusional, seeing himself riding into Moscow on a white charger "in a triumphal procession after the defeat of the Bolsheviks, and being acclaimed as the saviour of Russia!"[289]

But despite earlier Cabinet defeats for the Hardliners, it was not only Churchill who continued to hold such strong views on the subject. In April, a memo by General Richard Hawking, who was the commander of the British military mission to Russia in 1919, was sent to Churchill, who then circulated it around the Cabinet. It made a strong case for rebuilding Germany as a barrier for Western Europe:

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286 The Times, 12 April 1919

287 J.M. McEwen (Ed), *The Riddell Diaries, 1908-1923*, April 11 1919, p. 50,

288 Riddell Diaries, April 12 1919, p.51

289 Thelma Cazalet-Kier, *From the Wings*, London, 1967, pp. 62-64

> Meanwhile the great storm clouds of Bolshevism are daily rolling closer from East to West and protection against this menace is being neglected... The first step to be taken is to strengthen Germany in every possible way, so she can fight Bolshevism in her own country and on her frontiers... If the Anglo-Saxon race was to tell Germany tomorrow that the blockade is to be completely removed in three days, she would rise from her present apathy and despair, she should at once commence in far more energetic measures then heretofore to defeat Bolshevism, and she would raise a great bulwark to this terrible evil to protect Western Europe, and thus restore a real peace in the world.[290]

By courting support such as this, and by making speeches on the subject, Churchill was now causing deep concern in Number 10. What is certainly true is that upon his return to Britain, Lloyd George wanted to make clear his position and would do so in a rowdy debate on the 16th of April.

It was a House of Commons debate that was very hostile to the Prime Minister, but also one in which Lloyd George showed the intelligence and nuance that made him such a great politician. He emphasised that there was no question of recognising the Bolshevik regime for there was no *de facto* government of Russia. He made his view clear, setting out the risks that he saw in pursuing any policy of intervention: "I share the horror of all the Bolshevik teachings, but I would rather leave Russia Bolshevik until she sees her way out of it than see Britain bankrupt. And that is the surest road to Bolshevism in Britain."[291] He went on to declare that Russia was like a volcano: "It is still in fierce eruption, and the best you can do is provide security for those who are dwelling on its remotest and most accessible slopes, and arrest the devastating flow of lava so it will not scorch other lands." He went on to say that he could not condone intervention but that he would support the White Russians. Bolshevism, he declared, would dissolve in time.[292] It seemed that the Prime Minister had made up his mind. It was a fierce rebuttal to his Hardliner opponent and one that shows just how much the Prime Minister feared the places that any policy of intervention could lead. As Lloyd George's secretary and future wife Frances Stevenson stated in her diary entry for the next day, Churchill was: "giving

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290 Note by Winston Churchill following General Hawking Memo, The Defeat of Bolshevism, 08 April 1919, CAB 24/77/88
291 House of Commons Debate, 16 April 1919, Vol 114, cols. 2939-40
292 House of Commons Debate, 16 April 1919, Vol 114, cols 2945-73

D (Lloyd George) great trouble just at present; being Secretary of State for War, he is anxious that the World should not remain at peace, and is therefore planning a great war in Russia."[293]

In the end, Churchill's hopes for a renewed support for a policy of intervention were totally ended only a month later after a series of press reports engulfed the Secretary of State for War in a new argument. The newspapers had gained access to documents that suggested that conscription was being considered by Churchill for a future campaign in Russia. Asked in the Commons if the reports were true, Churchill denied the allegations: "There is not the slightest truth in anyone saying that we want this Bill for Conscription, for keeping 900,000 men with the Colours because of Russia, or because we are contemplating sending a large mass of conscript troops to Russia."[294]

In fact, there was some sign that it could have been true. The row had come about as the result of a recent army questionnaire that had gone out to the forces, suggesting that intervention was a possibility and asking their views. Unsurprisingly, the forms had been sent back showing no support for further conscription, but also alluding to an organised mass refusal to fight in Russia. *The Daily Herald* had managed to get hold of this questionnaire and had published it on the 13th and 14th of May – leading to mass protests among the public and troops alike about any possibility of sending troops to Russia and forcing Churchill to once again issue public assurances that this was not the case.[295] It was with this new information in hand that the pragmatists retook the initiative. Moreover, Liberal and Labour opposition to action had grown, largely because of Churchill's blunder over the conscription questionnaires in May, and a session of the Trades Union Congress in September had threatened to make plans for strikes and protests over the government's Russia policy.[296]

In a War Cabinet meeting on the 18th of June, the North Russian Relief Force was discussed, but with Curzon chairing and Lloyd George in Paris, there no real inquest into what this force was doing, and importantly if it

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293 A.J.P. Taylor (ed), *Lloyd George: A Diary by Frances Stevenson*, New York, 1971, p. 179, Entry 13 April 1919
294 House of Commons Debate, 13 May 1919, Vol 113, cols 80-82
295 Daily Herald, 13, 14 May, 1919
296 William Coates, *A History of Anglo-Soviet Relations*, 1943, pp. 140-1

was acting offensively. Curzon asked if it was aiming towards an eventual withdrawal as the Prime Minister had stipulated, and Churchill agreed that to be the case. In actual fact, the force was acting aggressively; Chamberlain tried to argue but was forced to back down. All of the other members of Cabinet other than Curzon, Churchill and Chamberlain remained quiet (including Milner and Law).[297] At the next meeting on the topic – the War Cabinet meeting on the 27th of June – the situation was raised again but by this point the northern relief force had advanced rapidly and been on the offensive for a matter of weeks. With Lloyd George still away, the Hardliners had been acting with impunity. Chamberlain and H. A. L. Fisher (President of the Board of Education) both argued against this and pushed against the continued intervention; however, with Curzon and Churchill adamant that the mission was proving a success, the moderates were forced to back down.[298] It could be argued that Churchill had now deliberately misled the Cabinet, and the Hardliners' views on Russia were so deeply held that they had a major impact on the Cabinet, the government and foreign policy.

It was in the end only a collapse on the ground, including a mutiny, that led the Relief Force to falter and Generals Maynard and Ironside to halt the offensive; Churchill's gamble had not paid off. The Whites had not proved strong enough to hold the territory that the British could support, and even this small intervention had shown the Cabinet that British forces were unwilling and unable to fight the Bolshevik forces in the region. Churchill had done his best to use the relief force as an interventionist unit but the confines placed upon him by his moderate Cabinet colleagues and the Prime Minister had tied his hands. What is clear is that he was still obsessed with his mission, breaking Cabinet conventions to reach out to White generals personally and now even bending a Cabinet decision to allow intervention to take place, albeit a small one.

During a debate on the Supplementary Vote for Account in July, Clement Edwards MP showed the anger of Churchill's followers that intervention was now considered a dead letter by the Cabinet:

> I am perfectly certain that the overwhelming opinion in this House, as it is in the country, is that it is of vital importance to this country, to our liberty, and to the future of the civilised world, that

[297] War Cabinet Conclusion, 18 June 1919, CAB 23/10/29
[298] War Cabinet Conclusions, 27 June 1919, CAB 23/15/18

> Bolshevism should be stamped out, and stamped out in Russia… if it is necessary, even by military intervention. I repeat, therefore, that if it were necessary to stamp out Bolshevism in Russia by military intervention, I should be prepared to support it.[299]

But the tide had turned and the policy was clear, as Chamberlain had told the Cabinet that day that Britain was at grave risk of making obligations in all directions without the means to support them.[300] With this in mind, government spokesman Robert Cecil, once sympathetic to such feeling, gave a strong rebuttal:

> Really is it suggested that we are to march an army into this gigantic country and seize Moscow? All that kind of thing is fantastic nonsense. Really, even if you could do it, it would not be the least good. Bolshevism is a creed, an idea. A very bad idea, I think, and a dangerous creed. But you would not destroy it by seizing Moscow. On the contrary, if you succeeded, you would drive Bolshevism outside Russia, and it would spread all the more freely and all the more vigorously over the rest of the world.[301]

By August 1919, Lloyd George had officially declared that the policy of intervention was a failure. He stated that Britain could no longer bear the burden of supporting a war that seemed both "indecisive and of doubtful utility".[302] Chamberlain too remained hugely concerned by finances. He saw the overall financial position as "desperate with expenditure exceeding all estimates."[303] After anger in Parliament, and no doubt fearful of mass backbench rebellion, Lloyd George compromised slightly and stated that he would continue to offer full support to the Whites until a fixed date, offering them a last chance to turn the tide in the conflict. However, if they had not established themselves by that time, then British support would cease. Churchill was unhappy but accepted the decision, but only after Lloyd George wrote him a blunt letter on the 22nd of September, reminding him that England had done all it could to keep faith with its Russian allies, but that "not a member of the Cabinet is prepared to go further... we cannot afford it". He finished by pleading with

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299 House of Commons Debate, 29 July 1919, Vol 118 cols 1963-2074

300 War Cabinet Minutes, 29 July 1919, cited Gilbert, Churchill iv, 2, p. 769

301 House of Commons Debate, 29 July 1919, Vol 118 cols 1963-2074

302 Riddell, Diary, pp. 117-18; September 1; Letter from Lloyd George to Churchill, August 30 1919, cited in Frank Owen, *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George, His Life and Times*, London 1954, p. 517

303 University of Birmingham Library, A Chamberlain Papers, A Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 3 August 1919, AC 5/1/135

Churchill to abandon further schemes, stating: “I have found your mind so obsessed by Russia that I felt I had good grounds for the apprehension that your great abilities, energy, and courage were not devoted to the reduction of expenditure.”[304] Lloyd George was not alone in his pleas to Churchill, with other key figures in government writing to warn him of his plans for a grand Russian Campaign. Newspaper baron Lord Rothermere also made his feelings clear, declaring in correspondence that “I am not vexed with you personally but I am with your Russian policy. The latter is the devil.”[305] On this, Liberal Cabinet members finally made their views known, led by Herbert Fisher, the Secretary of State for Education, who wrote to the PM stating that the White Russians did not represent the people of Russia and that they were not worth either military or financial assistance.[306] It seemed that Churchill and his allies were losing support across both houses and the press.

The writing was on the wall and a new withdrawal plan was formulated that, in the event of no White Army successes, would allow British forces to retreat from North and South Russia, while still allowing the supply of munitions to the White Russians to continue.[307] Churchill still retained hope that General Denikin could still achieve a victory against the Bolsheviks, even stating to Lloyd George that should Denikin overthrow the Bolsheviks, he would be prepared to “go as a sort of Ambassador” to “help Denikin mould the new Russian Constitution.”[308] At first, it seemed as if the Whites could still prevail, and on the 15th of October Churchill submitted a memo to Lloyd George in which he claimed that the White Russian forces were due to be victorious. He listed how Britain should prepare for this with measures such as recognising the White Army Government, continuing to support the anti-Bolshevik forces, and promoting an alliance between the new Russian state and Poland.[309] A Home Office Special Report also seemed jubilant, stating that “the Soviet Government was still technically in power, but its sphere of influence was daily contracting.”[310] Churchill used this as a pretext for increasing Britain's military support in Russia, arguing that, with victory in sight, a small escalation in the conflict could prove decisive for the White Russians. Churchill warned the House of

304 Cited in Churchill, *Aftermath,* pp. 261-70
305 Churchill Archives, letter from Lord Rothermere to Churchill, 9 August 1919, CHAR 2/106/25
306 Lloyd George Papers, LG note on Churchill Memo on Russian Situation, 30 August 1919, F/9/1/15
307 Pelling, *Churchill*, p. 256
308 Cited in Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War*, p. 247
309 Lloyd George Archive, Churchill to LG, 15 October 1919, LG/F/202/1/13
310 Home Office Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the UK, 16 October 1919, Cab 24/90/61

Commons in 1919 that any halfway house policy could end only in defeat.[311] Britain, he argued, should either totally withdraw from the conflict there or intervene more effectively – a coded way of stating his preference for larger-scale military involvement against the Bolsheviks. In arguing this, he hoped to force the Conservative Members of Parliament into action, knowing full well that the Conservative majority in the Commons had already ruled out any possibility of negotiated peace with the Bolshevik Regime.[312]

However, with the Whites losing the war, Lloyd George was adamant that no more money be wasted in an unwinnable war. Despite his objections in the face of an unmovable Prime Minister, Churchill was forced to agree to a new Cabinet policy to stop financial support after one more funding package to the White Generals Yudenich and Denikin, unless the situation should change. In the House of Commons on the 5th of November, his supporters scored a last small victory during a Debate on Supplementary Army Appropriation, managing to secure £15,000,000 for Denikin. Over six hours of debate had ensued in which Colonel John Ward (a key Churchill ally) defended the government against attacks by opponents of intervention. Churchill concluded the debate with a forceful summary of why Britain should continue to aid the anti-Bolsheviks. When the vote was taken, Churchill had won by 251 to 52.[313] It was the last success that Churchill would have in this area. With the failures of the White Russians and the acceptance by the Cabinet of reduced intervention, Lloyd George took the opportunity, supported by Chamberlain, to formally end British participation in Russia at a speech in London's Guildhall in November 1919, declaring: “We cannot, of course, afford to continue so costly an intervention in an interminable Civil War”.[314] And so it was that in the final months of 1919, only small skirmishes were fought by the British forces in North Russia, as the troops pulled back, ready for evacuation from the Port of Archangel.

Lloyd George defended himself in the Commons Debate on his speech on the 13th of November, stating that the Russian Civil War must be ended for humanitarian reasons and because Europe needed Russia's great resources of food and raw materials.[315] On hearing news of the speech, Clemenceau is claimed to have called

311 House of Commons Debate, 15 December 1919, Vol 123, cols 191
312 Pelling, *Churchill*, p. 254
313 House of Commons Debate, 5 November 1919, Vol. 120, cols 1545-1642
314 Ullman, *Britain and the Russian Civil War*, p. 306
315 House of Commons Debate, 13 November, 1919, Vol. 121, cols 470-75

the Prime Minister a "deserter in the face of the enemy."[316] On the 17th of that month, during a discussion on government policy in the Chamber, the die-hards continued to stand firm. Lieutenant-Colonel Guinness told the House that, "You can no more expect Bolshevism to live within its own boundaries than you can expect a man-eating tiger to live in a stall and feed on carrots."[317]

However, in Cabinet two things were made clear. Firstly the Bolsheviks would win the Civil War in Russia. Secondly, as a result of this, the argument for British intervention was soon to become obsolete. As Robert Cecil put it the next year, "Whenever the anti-Bolsheviks were successful, then there was a considerable reversion to what I may call the Churchillian policy. As soon as they were driven back, there was a great movement towards non-intervention."[318] The "great movement" had occurred with the failure of Generals Denikin and Kolchak, and what little fight Churchill and his supporters had left was now focused on delaying the increasingly inevitable total withdrawal of British forces from Russia. By mid-November, the plan for a gradual withdrawal of the British forces stationed in Russia began. Lloyd George called for the troops to be pulled out as soon as the ports were ice-free. Churchill, however, disagreed. Supported by General Maynard (Commander at Murmansk), he argued for reinforcements to be sent to the area and an offensive launched to stabilize the situation prior to withdrawal. Their argument – that it would be tantamount to signing the death warrants of the entire loyal population of the region should troops be withdrawn – won them this small concession.[319] A plan of small-scale counter attacks followed but, despite some success, the War Office stood by its decision to take all troops out as soon as it safely could.

The last British troops left Russia in November 1919. *The Times* called the capitulation a "pitiful exhibition" and Churchill took the cue to continue to express his anger at the end of intervention in Cabinet meetings.[320] This eventually saw Lloyd George dress him down in February 1920, stating that the government's policy was "to try to escape the results of the evil policy which Winston had persuaded the Cabinet to adopt."[321] This was a sign of just how difficult maintaining Cabinet loyalty, in the face of Churchill's manoeuvring and

316 Cited from Stephen Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants: The Little Nations at Versailles*, Texas, 1946, p. 102
317 House of Commons Debate, 17 November 1919 Vol 121 cols 681-772
318 House of Commons Debate, 12 February 1920, Vol 125, cols 282
319 House of Commons Debate, 30 January 1920, Vol 818, cols 19-20
320 See Cabinet Conclusion, 25 November 1919, CAB 23/37/11 and 26 November 1919, CAB 23/18/10
321 T. Jones, *Whitehall Diary, Volume* I , Edited by K Middlemas, 1969-71, p.105

their own anti-Bolshevik feelings, had been. The final curtain on formal British opposition to the Bolshevik Government came in early 1920 with the Prime Minister resuming trade discussions with the Soviets, leading eventually to the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement being signed on the 12th of February 1920. Despite objections by Churchill and Curzon, any support for the White Russians was from that point effectively ended, although Churchill would continue to receive letters of support for aspects of his plans during the years to come – not least his determination to rearm Germany as protection against Bolshevism.[322] His mind was also still set as he made clear in a paper on the topic on the 2nd of January 1920:

> We may abandon – the Allies may abandon – Russia. But Russia will not abandon them. The ghost of the Russian bear comes padding across the immense field of snow. Now it stops outside the Peace Conference in Paris, in silent reproach at their uncompleted task. Now it ranges widely over the enormous countries which lead us to the frontiers of India, disturbing Afghanistan, distracting Persia, and creating far to the southward great agitation and unrest among the hundreds of millions of our Indian population, who have hitherto lived in peace and tranquillity under British rule.[323]

The same day, Thomas Jones recorded that he confronted Lloyd George, stating that the decision to leave the Whites alone was a disgrace, shouting, "I will always advocate… the overthrow and destruction of that criminal regime." Though his relationship with Lloyd George survived, he finished his diatribe by magnanimously admitting that "you have gone on consistently, never varying, but always with the same fixed idea. I fought you and you have beaten me."[324]

Amery notes that despite this defeat, it seemed likely that Churchill was never to mellow on the issue of Bolshevism, and Second World War politics necessity aside, he was right.[325] But despite Churchill's conviction, the argument in Parliament had now been won by the moderates. It had taken two years of debate and had seen the Conservative Party split down the middle, but the debate on intervening in Russia was over. It was the last time that any question of armed opposition to Bolshevism abroad would be raised and

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322 One example can be seen in the Churchill Archives, Letter from WSC to General Sir Ian Hamilton thanking him for his support, July 21st 1920, CHAR 2/110/75

323 Churchill College Cambridge, Churchill Papers, Enemies to the Left, Dated January 2nd 1920

324 Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diaries,* I, p. 105

325 Leo Amery, *Diaries*, p. 505, 569

signalled a shift in British foreign policy. No longer would Britain seek to quell Bolshevism through the use of grand armies and fleets. Instead the battle would move much closer to home. The years 1920 to 1926 were to be dominated by the fear of domestic Communism and the question of how the government should confront this new danger.

Conclusion

The Russian Revolution had ignited the series of Cabinet-level debates that would persist on and off over the next decade, while the debates over intervention marked the real beginning of the factions in the Cabinet that this thesis seeks to analyse.

The Hardliners in the Cabinet had come together between 1917 and 1919 due to the new threat that Bolshevism represented, yet their dedication to the cause and influences for joining were varied. Churchill was undoubtedly the key figure in this grouping and his obsession with the issue, charisma and position in Cabinet made him a formidable opponent for the Prime Minister. His fear of Bolshevism and disgust at the collapse of traditional order and institutions in Russia were certainly major factors in his militancy and, as we have seen, these views were so strong that they even influenced his thinking over how Germany should be treated after years of conflict. In his quest for intervention, he was joined by Lord Curzon, who in his role as Foreign Secretary was more aware than most of the danger that Russia represented to the smaller states around it and to the British Empire. He was also concerned about the way in which this new ideology may spread through the war-ruined Europe and even Britain herself if not restrained while the chance remained. Wilson was perhaps the third key member of the faction and played an important role in the debates, offering military legitimacy to the arguments and no doubt giving many of the men in Parliament with military experience cause to think. Lastly, in terms of the Hardliners, we also see that a number of Cabinet members were supportive and sympathetic to the faction, willing to back them but not at all costs. These men, largely Milner and Balfour, were important figures and were shown to be in agreement with the Hardliners; however, due to other interests, their unwillingness to go against the PM or a better understanding of the financial realities of the time, they were unwilling to push the debate once it was clear that the Prime Minister had made up his mind. Despite this, their importance in establishing the group, legitimising it and in

forcing Lloyd George to bend in the earlier debates means that they still merit inclusion in this grouping.

With the rise of the Hardliners, we see the rise of the moderates occurring as a direct reaction to stop the former dominating Cabinet debates. Lloyd George was the key figure of this counter group and as Prime Minister held the most sway in debates. He was largely influenced by economic and social realities and his understanding of the consequences of any such military action. His main ally was Austen Chamberlain, who as a Conservative was important in showing that the factions were not based on Cabinet party lines (something Churchill also clearly shows). With these key figures in the moderate faction, we also must note that the largely silent section of Cabinet has to be assumed, unless stated, to have been in support of whatever policy the Prime Minister decided upon. That is not to say that these men were not wary or against Bolshevism – just that they are not as passionate as Churchill or Curzon in the matter, were more junior and dependent on the Prime Minister for their future success, were involved in policy that had no bearing on these debates, or were actually in agreement with the moderates' position. The core of both Hardliners and moderates was to remain the same for the rest of the coalition government, with these figures uncompromising in their differing opinions as to how this new threat should be dealt with. The other members were somewhat more fluid, though I would argue that their orbit around the faction they most aligned with was set and it was just a matter of which debates they entered that brought them to the fore.

With the Hardliner group relatively small, it must be assumed that it was the seniority of its members and the strength of its arguments that led to its impact in the debates and policy making around intervention. Indeed, Lloyd George had allowed a great deal of leeway to many in his government, not least Churchill, who had got away not just with dissent but also his mad dash to Paris to conduct his own war policy. He had also given way to the Hardliners a number of times, allowing some military forces to remain in Russia, continuing support of the White Army for longer than he would have liked and listening to policy ideas around the Baltic States, Russia itself and a range of other related areas in Cabinet. The circumstances of the age undoubtedly played a large role in this behaviour: with the country still reeling from war and the new threat of the Labour Party's popular version of Socialism, it was too dangerous for Lloyd George to risk unsettling his already divided Cabinet. Added to this was the strength of support for Churchill and his views from Conservative Cabinet members and backbenches. A coalition government had also been necessary in

such a dangerous political environment. With an emboldened Labour Party and a seemingly fragile coalition, it is perhaps no surprise that Lloyd George refused to risk a split with the Conservatives and the subsequent General Election. It was this reality alongside the acceptance in a more genuine Cabinet government in the period that allowed such a divided and unruly Cabinet to remain in government.

The question of intervention had been fought out in Cabinet between these groups, with the moderates eventually taking the initiative and ensuring that Britain did not get sucked into a conflict in Russia. However, the fact that this was done without an irreversible fracture in the Cabinet comes down to the middle-way policy adopted by Lloyd George throughout the debate and perhaps forced by the strength of the Hardliners. Though clearly not in favour of intervention, he was willing to offer the Hardliners concessions on some aspects to ensure their support. The added time given to the British forces stationed in Russia in support of the White Russians, and the weaponry and money given to these allies even when it was clear that they would be defeated, are testimony to this approach. Despite the anger of the Hardliners in the Cabinet and the calls from backbenchers and ministers for an intervention in Russia, the Prime Minister had managed to create a compromise solution where none looked possible, managing to maintain his position as a moderate while appeasing the Hardliners in his government. It is this form of political manoeuvring that came to define Lloyd George's approach to Cabinet on the issue; in so doing, he seemed to find a path that was able to satisfy the Hardliners in Cabinet, keep the moderates on his side, and avoid staring any real revolutionary threat. It was, however, the formation and strength of the Hardliners that forced this middle-way approach in the first place and led directly to the formation of the moderate grouping – factions that would be apparent in the key debates concerning Bolshevism for the rest of the coalition's lifespan.

Chapter 4: "The Road to Revolution"? Domestic Unrest and Bolshevik Conspiracies, Britain 1917 - 1919

"This is the first germ of Bolshevism, and, in every country, it finds suitable soil in which to flourish and spread itself at alarming speed."[326] *– General Hawking, 1919*

As the dark shadow of war had loomed over Britain in early 1914, a patriotic fever had broken out across the country. Old grievances had been laid aside and for people of all classes the importance of the war effort and British pride had superseded the political issues that had been bubbling up for the last twenty years. But after two years of total war, old tensions were re-igniting and class divisions opening up. The divide between the comfort of the industrial elite and the grinding poverty of the working class served to incite anger in thousands of war-weary young men as they returned from the mud-soaked horror of the trenches

By 1916, Lloyd George and his War Cabinet were forced to add a new item to their weekly agenda: the threat of domestic unrest was to be an issue that would haunt them for a further decade. Aware of the pre-war clashes between the working class and the state, Lloyd George had been wary of exacerbating the situation, but the government had been forced to extend conscription to skilled workers and had been unable to deal with the old problems such as the cost of living, inadequate housing and things as apparently trivial as the dilution of beer. As a result, the country was once again at risk of class war at home.[327] As part of the war effort, harsh anti-strike policies had also been enacted, such as the 1915 Munitions Act, which allowed workers to be fined or jailed for leaving their jobs to take industrial action but, despite this, by 1916 over 1,000 workers had been convicted after they participated in 56 strikes and a further 10,000 had been jailed for other breaches of the Act.[328]

Then came the Russian Revolution, which according to the Prime Minister, "lit up the skies with a lurid flash of hope for all who were dissatisfied with the existing order of society... [and] encouraged all the habitual

[326] Note by Winston Churchill following General Hawking Memo, The Defeat of Bolshevism, 8 April 1919, CAB 24/77/88
[327] John Grigg, *Lloyd George, War Leader 1916-18,* London, 2011, p.110
[328] R. Page Arnot, *The Miners*, London, 1953, pp. 166-7

malcontents in the ranks of labour to foment discord."[329] As May Day approached, even the normally level-headed Arthur Henderson was increasingly concerned that the situation could become violent, warning colleagues that "it was one that would need careful handling."[330] The events in Russia gave the far left in Britain a new cause, bringing in large numbers of new members and galvanising existing supporters. Large conventions such as the Leeds Soviet Convention on the 3rd of June 1917 had shown the depth of left-wing support in the country: the Convention was attended by 1,200 delegates, with calls for Bolshevism to rise at home.[331]

The government, the threat of revolution and party splits

For the government, the first real test was to come in March 1917 – a year that had seen a rising anti-government anger from the workers. The Russian Revolution had led to a drive for one solid front to represent the voices of working discontent in Britain, and the shop stewards' movement began to unify as a result. In Cabinet there was consternation, and at this point they were in agreement that rationing, poor working conditions and now German naval operations affecting food supplies had all combined to create an atmosphere of violence that had not been felt in the previous three years of war. The threat of conscription being extended to munitions workers was also a concern for the Cabinet.[332] As Lloyd George later recorded in his memoirs, more and more voices were being raised in anger against the government: "Grievances multiplied in regard to wage rates and at this time when submarine warfare had caused a food shortage which was the most serious grievance of all."[333] Industrial conflict seemed sure to occur soon, but the speed of its escalation and the scale of working participation that would shock the government to the core.

On the 21st of March 1917, the newly established National Organisation of Shop Stewards faced its first test with a small strike breaking out in a Barrow factory. Within a week, some 10,000 men had joined the pickets.[334] In London, the War Cabinet was concerned, and an internal battle that would be refought over the

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329 David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, London, 1938, p. 1933
330 Chris Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour in the Post War Coalition 1918-1922*, London, 1990, p.189
331 T. H. Wintringham, *Mutiny*, London, 1936, p. 175 and The Herald, June 9, 1917
332 Cabinet Conclusions, 21 February 1917, CAB 23/1/76
333 Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of Lloyd George*, p.145
334 Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain* , p. 157

coming years began between those who believed that negotiation and compromise were the answer and those who believed that only strong action could control the escalating domestic situation.[335] In this case, it was the Hardliners who won out and Cabinet decided that harsh measures should be used to reassert order in the region. At the Cabinet meeting on the 2nd of April, the Minister for Labour made it clear that negotiation was not working and that harder action needed to be taken. He called for the arrest of the ringleaders and for the other men on strike to return to work or also be tried for interrupting war production. Under pressure from Curzon and Milner, Lloyd George agreed, though he did stipulate that negotiations regarding the strikers' grievances would begin as soon as they ended the strike.[336] It was an approach that worked – sympathy strikes faded and the Barrow men were forced to return to work.

Despite commissioning a report on what had gone wrong in Barrow, the government ploughed ahead with its plans for conscription, and working conditions and wages for men in the factories remained poor.[337] By the end of April, more strikes had begun to break out in the North, largely due to the failure of management to deal with numerous basic pay issues – men whom Lloyd George saw as "all of that stubborn autocratic type that was in its way dangerous to industrial peace as the worst communist agitator."[338] Again the stewards called for sympathy strikes and in the following days some 60,000 workers were on strike in Lancashire alone. At its peak, the strike covered nearly 50 towns and cities and saw over 200,000 men out, costing one and half million working days.[339] For the government, the threat of revolution seemed to have arrived – and at a pace none could have anticipated. Looking with fear at the events that had spread through Russia in the same year, as well as the food riots in Italy and a mutiny in the German city of Kiel, they wondered if such disasters were spreading to Britain.

With such a vast strike to deal with, the Cabinet delayed, unsure of how best to act to resolve it. Again, the two sides in government clashed. The Hardliners, after consultation with the head of the CID Basil Thomson, advised a strong reaction: the arrest and imprisonment of all strike leaders across the country. But after internal debate, the Cabinet decided against such an aggressive move, instead opening limited negotiations

335 Cabinet Conclusions, 26 March 1917, CAB 23/2/22
336 Cabinet Conclusion, 2 April 1917, CAB 23/2/8
337 Cabinet Memo, The Barrow Strike, 11 April 1917, CAB 24/10/18
338 Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, p. 1940
339 David Jeffereys, *History of the Engineers*, London, 1946, p.183; Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain*, p. 156

with the strikers. This pragmatic policy even saw the King and Queen sent to the worst-affected areas to remind the men of their patriotic duty – a move that Lloyd George later stated played a vital role in reducing the threat of revolution. With tempers eased, the Cabinet met a week later on the 16th of May. Lloyd George, alongside Conservative moderates Bonar Law and Austen Chamberlain, knew that the anger was based on working-class grievances, arguing that these were the key issue and not far left politics.[340]

The Hardliners – on this occasion Milner, Curzon and Cecil – disagreed, but with the leadership bringing the majority of the Cabinet onside, a much less confrontational plan was agreed upon, focused on the arrest of a small number of key strike figures. In all, seven of the ten men named were taken into custody by 7pm that very evening. The policy followed was to be one of negotiation and limited action.[341] It worked, with the remaining strike leaders capitulating in a meeting on the 19th of May. The stewards also backed down in return for promises made over jobs not being lost and the 200,000 strikers returned to work largely without protest. The stewards had lost, but in defeat they had terrified the government and shown the power of mass movements; emboldened by this and by the obvious divides in the government, they had the potential to make it a tense summer.[342]

The government, too, wanted answers, and on the 12th of June 1917 a Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Discontent was set up. The report was completed a week later – extremely fast in government terms – showing the importance placed on dealing with the threat of domestic rebellion.[343] It showed an increasing lack of confidence in the government itself, growing anger at a number of policies, not least the Munitions Act, and even went on to describe the situation in South Wales as being so radical that there was a "breakaway from faith in Parliamentary representation. The influence of the advanced men is growing very rapidly and there is ground for belief that under their leadership attempts of a drastic character will be made by the working classes as a whole to secure direct control by themselves of their particular industries."[344] It concluded with the assurance that: "Feelings of a revolutionary character are not entertained by the bulk of

[340] Cabinet Conclusions, 16 May 1917, CAB 23/2/57
[341] B. Thompson, *The Scene Changes*, London, 1939, p. 371
[342] W. Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain* ,p. 160
[343] Sir William Chance, *The Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Discontent: Reports of the Commissioners, Collated and Epitomised, The British Constitution* Association, 1917
[344] Ministry of Munitions, Reports from the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest: No 7 Wales (8668),1917, MUN 5/49/300/31

the men."[345] But despite this, it had shown clearly that revolutionary feeling did exist across the country.

The Commission's findings on London described the ringleaders of unrest as: "consisting of more ardent and less responsible spirits... frankly revolutionary... at present in a small minority; but there is a danger... that... a large group of the shop stewards proper will make common cause with the revolutionary group."[346] In Yorkshire and the East Midlands, the report concluded that: "The government should without delay do something... if not... they will lose the adherence of the large body of moderate sensible working men... and thus even these men may, in time, become adherents of a wild cause in which at present they have no real belief."[347] Deeply alarmed, the government took counter-measures: the price of food was looked at; concessions were made in the Munitions Bill; and police surveillance was heavily increased on the stewards. The Cabinet also called for a special report on the danger of revolution.[348] It was now clear that a new revolutionary threat existed in the nation; the question for the government was, would it remain confined to a minority, or spread throughout the working class as a whole? The way in which to deal with this threat was to form the basis of the internal government clash on industrial relations over the next two years, with Lloyd George, Chamberlain and Law coming under pressure from Hardliners such as Churchill and Curzon to eschew compromise and pursue strong action.

The tension in the Cabinet was not helped by reports that many on the far left believed that the time for revolutionary change had now begun, and that a concerted effort to increase support amongst the workers was already underway.[349] The Cabinet watched in horror as the conditions for revolution seemed to increase every day. Rationing had taken a heavy toll on the working poor with thousands queueing in the streets for essential goods. At the same time, the Spanish flu had begun to spread throughout the malnourished populace, hitting the working classes especially hard.[350] As William Gallacher later recalled, a famous song of the time in industrial cities showed the anger felt by many: "Go to war, workers, go to the war. Heed not the Socialists but wallow in gore; Shoulder your rifle, worker, don't ask what for; Let your wife and children

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345 Ministry of Munitions, Reports from the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest (Cd.8696), 1917, MUN 5/49/300/34

346 Ministry of Munitions, Reports from the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest: No 5 London and South East (Cd.8666), 1917, MUN 5/49/300/29

347 Ministry of Munitions, Reports from the Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest: No 2 North West (Cd.8663), 1917, MUN 5/49/300/26

348 Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain*, p. 164

349 J.T. Murphy, *Preparing for Power, London*, 1934, p. 152, The Call, 24 January 1918, The Call, 14 February 1918

350 Andrew Rothstein, *The Soldiers' Strikes of 1919*, London, 1980, p.5

starve, and go to the war."[351]

Austen Chamberlain, aware of the danger facing the country, wrote to a friend that, "we could be well on the road which leads to revolution."[352] With his more moderate Cabinet colleagues, he was also concerned by those in his own party preaching a policy of confrontation. With the end of the war now only a matter of time, he confessed his fears to his sister Ida, describing how he saw a storm coming: "A future full of difficulty and danger, strikes, discontent and much revolutionary feeling in the air when the strain and patriotic self-repression of the last few years is removed."[353] Indeed, by mid-1918 the level of unrest in the country had grown considerably. So by the time the bells chimed for peace on the 11th of November, many who cheered the destruction of one enemy began to think about another, this time much closer to home. For the government and its supporters, the threat was Bolshevism, and the men who led its domestic charge. For the workers, it was the elite, and the unfair society that they were no longer willing to live in. The question now was a simple one: could the precipice be backed away from, or would those moderate men on both sides be overtaken by events and by those more extreme figures who wished to control them?

1918 – 1919: Strikes

By November 1918, the growth in Britain's industrial capacity to meet the demands of the nation's military had been rapid. The trade union movement had as a consequence also become a new force, and by 1918 it was linked with its own political arm, the Labour Party, and had up to 6,500,000 members.[354] In March 1918, the threat that this growth represented seemed to come to life. Home Office agents began to send increasingly worrying reports to the Cabinet in Westminster. One from an agent working inside Glasgow BSP shows how heightened the fears had become: "The spread of this spirit is alarming, and evidence can be obtained of a determined effort to emulate the Russian Bolshevik movement in this country."[355] At the same time, strikes were spreading across the country, and, although small at first, by the spring of 1918 some 50,000 miners and 17,000 engineers and shipbuilders were on strike. By June, they were joined by 10,000

[351] William Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, London: 1936, Pg. 179
[352] Chamberlain Archives, A Chamberlain to L. Gell, 22 May 1918, Chamberlain MSS, AC 3/1/14
[353] Chamberlain Archives, A Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 9 Nov 1918, Chamberlain MSS, AC 5/1/16
[354] Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism, 4th edition'*, London, 1987, p. 298
[355] R.K Middlemas, *The Clydesiders*, London 1965, p. 89

iron and steel workers; in July 100,000 workers from a range of industries were added to the picket line; and by August, this figure had grown to 225,000.[356]

In Parliament and the Cabinet, the reality of this situation saw the moderates and Hardliners approach a solution in markedly different ways. For men like Winston Churchill, the bloodied hand of Russian Bolshevism could be seen in all the continual unrest in Britain. It seemed clear to him and his allies that it was a movement that the government needed to crush – with military force if necessary – before "very active men" inspired revolt.[357] Robert Cecil shows how the Cabinet debate over intervention and Bolshevism had now expanded into a secondary one over the domestic threat. He had, after some protest, moved into line behind Lloyd George and the moderates over intervention but now he warned clearly that this fight was a new one: "The Bolshevik Government has made no secret of its intense hostility to the government of this country. It has published attack after attack of the most violent kind on this country. It has made no secret of the fact that its policy is social revolution in all countries."[358] Again, the backbenchers rallied behind Churchill and his allies, giving them a weight of support perhaps needed in their clash with the powerful more moderate voices of the Cabinet.

Bonar Law, alarmed by the increasing hysteria and militancy among his Cabinet colleagues, tried to use his position as Conservative Party Leader to return a voice of reason to the party. Though as concerned at the increasing and protracted strikes as his colleagues, and the threat they posed to the British economy, he firmly believed that it was still a matter of simple grievances that lay behind the strikers' demands and not Bolshevism as many feared.[359] An anecdote from the time sums up his attitude: "While at dinner with friends his hostess asked (referring to the strikers), 'Now tell me, Mr. Bonar Law, what do these people really want?' Law looked at the table with its gold and silver, at the fine room they dined in and at the servants: "Perhaps, they want just a little of all of this.'"[360] In this view, he was not alone, with many grass-root Conservatives remaining confident that "the British working man was no fool, and... when he thoroughly understood the

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[356] Rothstein, *The Soldiers Strikes*, p.8
[357] As one of his allies the Earl of Selbourne warned the Lords, House of Lords Debate 26 Feb 1918, Vol 29 cols 109-21
[358] House of Commons Debate, 27 February 1918, Vol 103 cc 1405-522
[359] Robert Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister, The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law*, 2010, p. 411
[360] Cited from Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister*, p. 412

problem' he would vote for constitutionalism and not Socialism."[361]

However, many of Bonar Law's colleagues remained of a very different opinion. The makeup of parliament at the time was of industrial and military elites. As J. C. Davidson described upon entering Parliament, "[It is a] high percentage of hard headed men, mostly on the make, who fill up the ranks of the Unionist Party. The old-fashioned country gentlemen, and even the higher ranks of the learned professions, are scarcely represented at all."[362] These were men who had a lot to lose from any form of class war that might erupt and who were therefore willing to act without constraint to ensure that it would not.

Law's attempts at pacifying such men was not helped by the mood on the left of British politics. The moderates, led by MacDonald, were becoming increasingly concerned at the rise of extremism of their flank. Arthur Henderson was moved to write in 1918 that he feared the coming of "barricades of blood revolution alien to the British character, violence will rule the thoughts of the masses of the people" and these "vast numbers of the population [were now, post war] skilled in the use of arms, disciplined, inured to danger."[363] The communists themselves felt they were close to their goals, as Gallagher would later write: "revolt was seething everywhere, especially in the army. We had within our hands the possibility of giving actual expression and leadership to it, but it never entered our heads to do so."[364] Beatrice Webb summed up the mood in her diary: "The Bolsheviks grin at us from a ruined Russia and their creed, like the plague of influenza, seems to be spreading westwards from one country to another."[365]

The effect of this on the working classes, closely monitored in weekly reports, was not going unnoticed, one quoted *The Call*, which the agent describes as "an unspoken call to revolution in England."[366] By late 1918, Lloyd George was feeling the pressure. Despite remaining pragmatic and moderate, he regarded the threat as the greatest domestically since the 1840s, when the great changes in industrial Britain had seen thousands

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[361] Cited from Ball, *Portrait of a Party*, p.19, original source Wood Green CA, Palmers Green branch, Exec., 8 Oct 1919

[362] Sir Harold Nicolson, *King George* V, London, 1952, p. 333

[363] Arthur Henderson, *The Aims of Labour*, London 1918, 57 - 58

[364] Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, 221, see also the views of Arthur Ransome, The Truth about Russia, WSF Pamphlet, The Workers' Socialist Federation, 1918 and Mary Patricia Willcocks, Towards New Horizons, London, 1919, p. 6

[365] Webb, *The Diary of Beatrice Webb III'*, p. 316

[366] The Labour Situation. Report from the Ministry of Labour, 11 December 1918, CAB 24/72/18

reduced to poverty and near starvation.[367] The newspaper owner and former MP, Lord Burnham, was explicit in his view on the situation to the Prime Minister, stating, "we cannot hope to escape some sort of revolution" and expressing his fear that, "there will be no passionate resistance from anybody."[368] By the signing of the Armistice, weary from the strains of the war and torn between his belief in moderation and his awareness of the threat facing the nation, the Prime Minister went through a short period of political paralysis. Churchill and fellow Hardliners were quick to use this to their advantage. One of them, Field Marshall Wilson, began to issue military directives without consulting the Prime Minister or Bonar Law. One order to the Air Ministry stated that firing on rioters was not only a necessity in a situation of revolution, but also that it must be effective.[369] A RAF magazine commented on the new instructions that fighter pilots "would have but little mercy on a Bolshevik mob... the RAF pilots and observers have had much practice during the German retreat in operating against mobs on roads and streets."[370]

The Hardliners in Cabinet were also being energised by the support coming from both the backbenches and, more than ever, the press. Just one example can be seen in the writings of the *Daily News* on the unrest in Germany, which it attributed to "the flood of Bolshevik agitators" coming in from Russia.[371] Elsewhere, it was claimed by Christabel Pankhurst that the Bolsheviks aimed to nationalise our women and that the growth of the far left in the country was like a "savage tiger […] prowling around the garden."[372] This press fear mongering was backed up, so it seemed, by the continued reports of far left agitation reaching the Cabinet, with one showing that not all in the Pankhurst family were as worried as Christabel: "A private letter from Miss Sylvia Pankhurst to a friend in Glasgow which has come into my hands, concludes with the words, 'I expect the Revolution soon, don't you!'"[373] The Hardliners seemed to be in ascendency; leading Socialists were arrested in the last months of 1918, and the police raided the HQ of the British Socialist Party in October. Tough measures were increasingly green-lighted and in November the threat was reiterated in the Cabinet by Alfred Mond, the First Commissioner of Works, who stated that "there is undoubtedly in this country, as in all others, a certain fever of revolutionary Bolshevik ideas. Bodies of workers like to call

[367] Challinor, *The Origins of British Bolshevism*, p. 196
[368] Basil Thomson, *The Scene Changes*, London, 1939, p. 410.
[369] Air Ministry Weekly Orders for 7th November 1918, AIR 72/1 and in Aeroplane, 13 November 1918
[370] Aeroplane, 13 November 1918.
[371] Daily News, 15 November, 1918
[372] Christabel Pankhurst, *A Warning to British Women*, 1918
[373] Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisation in the United Kingdom, and Morale Abroad, 2 December 1918, CAB 24/71/25

themselves Soviets and talk of Bolshevism and revolution."[374]

In the aftermath of the election held in December, the Coalition was to become dominated by Unionists, who had won by far the most seats. The War Cabinet was increased to include Chamberlain, now Chancellor, and the Cabinet itself now included eleven Unionists. With Churchill the key figure from the Liberals, the Unionists included Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain, Robert Horne, Curzon, Balfour, Walter Long and Birkenhead. It was Birkenhead, Churchill and Chamberlain who remained the figures that dominated the Cabinet over the issues of social unrest and industrial dispute that were to dominate the start of the new government.[375] Even before the votes were all counted, the issue was showing cracks among the Cabinet on the matter. Such was the impasse in Cabinet that in the meeting on December 23rd both sides were reduced to shouting across the table. Sir Henry Wilson was so incensed that he stormed out after the moderates "refused to consider either that a state of war existed, or that a Bolshevik rising was likely."[376] Walter Long, First Lord of the Admiralty, was so concerned that he passed on a Secret Service memo to Lloyd George in January 1919 which warned, "I now find myself convinced that British Bolshevism must be faced and grappled with… I believe there will be some sort of revolution in this country and before 12 months are passed." Long wrote to the PM, "I beg your attention to the enclosed. I am now convinced the danger is real."[377] It was therefore to add to the frustration of Long, as well as Curzon, Churchill and others, when policy on issues such as this ignored Conservative opinion and backbench voices. As Walter Long had stated on the night, "George thinks he has won the elections. Well he didn't. It was the Tories that won the election, and he will soon begin to find that out."[378]

Churchill made his views clear in Cabinet on the 31st of January 1919: "There should be a conflict to clear the air [though] they should be careful to have plenty of provocation before taking strong measures. By going gently at first, we should get the support we wanted from the nation, and the troops could be used

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374 Alfred Mond, First Commissioner of Works, Suggestions to prevent the Spread of Revolutionary Ideas in the United Kingdom, 12 November 1918 - CAB 24/69/70

375 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: Lloyd Georges Government 1918-1922*, 1979 p. 44

376 Callwell, Field Marshall *Henry Wilson*, p. 148 and R Higham, Armed Forces in Peacetime, London, 1962, p. 21 and Cabinet Conclusions, December 23 1919, CAB 23/42/17

377 Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Papers, Long to LG, 9 January 1919, Lloyd George MSS F/33/2/3

378 A.J.P. Taylor (ed.*), Lloyd George – A Diary by Francis Stevenson,* London, 1971, p. 169

more effectively."[379] Even Bonar Law, a moderate and staunch ally of Lloyd George, considered curbing the use of strike funds for the unions themselves.[380] Austen Chamberlain, too, was concerned enough to advocate the use of force.[381] On an impending railway strike in 1919, he wrote to his sister to declare: "This is not a quarrel between capital and labour, or a question of wages or conditions of employment. It is a revolutionary attempt to subvert government and establish class rule… It is a challenge to the government and a challenge to the Nation and I believe that both will take it up and fight it through."[382] Chamberlain even seemed to be coming to the oft-repeated Churchillian argument that Labour was a moderate face for the Bolsheviks, later admitting to Cecil that he believed that the party constituted a "serious menace to the nation... because of its difference from every other party... in being directed and controlled from outside Parliament".[383] But despite Chamberlain's wavering, Lloyd George, Law, and others remained staunchly in favour of compromise and dialogue with the strikers.

With the government on edge, the unions began to raise the stakes and by 1919 the threat of a Triple Alliance was spooking the Cabinet – something that, when combined with the 600,000 unemployed by February 1919 and a new and more militant left, could spell disaster. The risk was so great that the Home Secretary even broached the idea of a permanent citizen force to aid against the far left: "The time will surely come when we will be forced to enrol some sort of Civic Guard to keep order in the streets, as has been done in Holland and Switzerland."[384]

After union agitation in Belfast and Glasgow, the first large-scale strikes occurred. In Belfast on the 25th of January, some 26 unions joined a mass strike, and all electricity was cut except in hospitals while the harbour was closed to all ships. The Cabinet argued about the consequences, with the moderates keeping control and pushing for patience.[385] In March, tensions rose again with a Triple Alliance of Railwaymen, Miners and Dockers putting forward a demand for fewer hours and higher wages.

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379 Cabinet Conclusions, 31 January 1919, CAB 23/9/10

380 Davidson Papers, House of Lords Record Office, Law to Davidson, 20 March 1919

381 Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain*, p. 154

382 The Chamberlain Archives, A Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 26th Sept 1922, Chamberlain MSS, AC 5/1/139 and also A Chamberlain to Ivy Chamberlain, 28th Sept 1922, Chamberlain MSS, AC 6/1/355 and also T. Jones, Whitehall Diary, p. 102

383 The Chamberlain Archives, A Chamberlain to R Cecil, 26 April 1921, Chamberlain MSS, AC 24/3/16

384 Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Abroad, 10 Febuary 1919, Cab24/75/16

385 Cabinet Conclusion, 15 January 1919, CAB 23/9/3

It was at this point that F. E. Smith, now Lord Birkenhead, had risen to the position of Lord Chancellor, having previously been Attorney General. A close friend of Churchill, it was seen by many as likely that he would give some support to the Hardliners, and indeed in later years he would be a key member, but under Lloyd George he remained largely silent. Until the 1920s, he was largely a member of the third, silent group in Cabinet, with Lloyd George describing him as "reserved and generally silent".[386] Hankey felt the same and noted to his colleagues that he was a "strong silent man".[387] Indeed, as Campbell points out, due to this, he often is not represented in the notes of Cabinet debates at the time; indeed one might summarise that he never spoke at all at this point in the debate on Bolshevism.[388] However, it is of interest to note that in later life, when he became much more hard-line on Bolshevism, he stated some regret about his inactivity during his early career: "I was never able to share the sanguineness with which he (Churchill) surveyed each new attempt to dislodge the Soviet murderers. But, at least his impulses were sound."[389] In Cabinet, Lloyd George made clear that he would stay strong against the threat but that he still believed that social reform, the preservation of order and a united strong government were key to protecting the nation. Violence would be a failure and could cause Britain to join the two thirds of Europe "already converted to Bolshevism."[390]

Overruling the militant members of the Cabinet, Lloyd George and Bonar Law decided to enter negotiations. However, even the Prime Minister was starting to worry about the eventual outcome of the continued clashes between government and unions; in fact, such was the tension that Lloyd George would lament to Bonar Law that he felt as though the unions had "challenged society to a duel."[391] Despite this, once again the government had decided on a path of caution, but its Hardliners were running out of patience in the face of what they saw as the beginnings of full-blown insurrection.[392] Before leaving for the Paris Peace Conference, the Prime Minister and Bonar Law took it upon themselves to meet with union leaders to discuss the ever-worsening situation, with Lloyd George making clear to them the risk of real conflict and asking them to step

386 Lloyd George foreword to Birkenhead's biography, Thornton Butterworth, Birkenhead: *Fredrick Edwin, Earl of Birkenhead*, vol II, London, 1935, p. 12

387 K. Middlemas (ed.), *Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary*, Oxford, 1969, p. 234

388 John Campbell, *F.E Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead*, London, 1991

389 Sunday Times, 3rd March, 1924

390 Cabinet Conclusions, 3 March 1919, CAB 23/9/26

391 Lloyd George Papers, LG to Law, 19 March 1919, F/30/3/31

392 Cabinet Conclusions, 20 March 1919, CAB 23/9/35

back from the brink. It was a plea perhaps given in part due to the growing strength of the aggressive Hardliners in the Cabinet, and it was one that was listened to.

With the Prime Minister leaving for Paris, Bonar Law continued the negotiations. Describing the situation to Lloyd George in a letter, even he, a faithful ally to the Prime Minister's policy of diplomacy, was starting to turn towards a stronger reaction. He stated that, if called, "a strike would be against the State and that the State must win and use all its power for that purpose, otherwise it would be the end of government in this country..."[393] Law went on to say that if a strike did occur, he would "act quickly to pass legislation allowing him to arrest the leaders and seize all strike funds."[394] In the end, he did not have to: the negotiations and plea made by the Prime Minister before his departure had worked. Such was the relief among many in the Cabinet that the government had seemingly stood up to the threat that even Hardliner Curzon wrote to congratulate Lloyd George for conducting "the battle of the nation against organised attack."[395]

Once this was clear, Law moved back into line with his political mentor, continuing the negotiations to thrash out the details for an end to the strikes. In a letter to the leader of the Conservative Party, the Prime Minister congratulated him: "I must once more congratulate you on the extreme skill and success with which you handled the industrial situation. As you say, I have no doubt there are plenty of troubles ahead of us but it is very satisfactory to know that you have overcome the worst of them in England."[396] With the success of negotiations, Bonar Law was now convinced that only through dialogue with the unions could the real threat to the nation, that of militant Bolshevism, be extinguished – believing that the majority of the men on the pickets were there to address real industrial grievances. He declared as much in the Cabinet: "Trade Unionism is the only thing between us and Anarchy, and if trade unionism was against us, then the position would be hopeless."[397] The key to Law was to ensure that the Unions acted responsibly and were not overtaken by the militancy that did exist in the wings of the movement. He was not alone in this view, holding on to the support of the staunch moderates in Government. One of these men was a Treasury Minister, whose future would see him play the leading role in the nation's politics – Stanley Baldwin.

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[393] Bonar Law Papers, Letter from Law to Lloyd George, 22 March 1919, LG/F/30/3/34
[394] Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister*, p. 413
[395] Lloyd George Papers, Curzon to LG, 6 October 1919, F/12/1/46
[396] Bonar Law Papers, Letter from Lloyd George to Law, 30 March 1919, LG/F/30/3/40
[397] Cabinet Conclusions, 31 January 1919, CAB 23/9/10

Writing to his mother, Baldwin described his view:

> I think it has been a great victory over the wild men, and in one feature at least no other country could compete. You have had in some ways the biggest strike we have ever had, with masses of other men thrown out of work, and there has been practically no violence or sabotage. Nothing beyond what the blackguard part of the community would do at any time if it had the chance and the spare time. All Europe was watching, and if we had had any kind of upset here, you would have seen Italy alight and perhaps France as well.[398]

Despite the seeming truce, the Hardliners remained wary and unconvinced of the moderates' viewpoints. General Hawking (previously noted as the heads of the military mission to Russia in 1919), deeply disturbed at the situation, penned a memo to his good friend Churchill, which was later passed around the Cabinet. Here he made it clear that he firmly believed that Bolshevism had arrived on the shores of England and that those in support of it would have to be fought – not reasoned with.

> This is the first germ of Bolshevism, and, in every country, it finds suitable soil in which to flourish and spread itself at alarming speed. It affects the individual in the first instance, and thrives mainly on self-interest. The individual who suffers from it knows no patriotism, love of his country, or regard for other people, though he pretends he possesses all these qualities.... His politics are international and he will hail as a brother anyone of any class, criminal or otherwise, belonging to any country, who will assist him in his task of breaking down the previous fabric of civilisation, whilst he is not in the least bit concerned about building up anything in its place.[399]

It was a message that, when combined with both the warnings of Lenin and situation on the ground, was read with anxiety by many in Westminster's wood-panelled Cabinet room. It would soon seem to the Hardliners that their predictions were coming true, for in the Clyde a real rebellion was brewing which would see the opposing Cabinet beliefs in compromise and force both come to the fore.

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[398] Phillip Williamson and Edward Baldwin (Eds), *Baldwin Papers: A Conservative Statesman, 1908-1947*, SB to Louisa Baldwin, 7th October 1919, Cambridge 2004, p.45

[399] Note by Winston Churchill following General Hawking Memo, The Defeat of Bolshevism, 8 April 1919, CAB 24/77/88

The Clyde

It was among the carcasses of war, half-finished battleships and dreadnoughts of the empire's navy lying on the grey waters of the Clyde, that the biggest threat to domestic stability came, in late 1918. Some of the fiercest resistance to the government had come from here during the War, and with men such as William Gallacher, Arthur McManus, Neil Maclean, and David Kirkwood at the head of the workers, it was the first real battleground between the militant left and the government in the inter-war period.

In March 1917, the first Russian revolution had brought new hope to the men on the Clyde – men who had for years been pushing for radical change. That May Day, the shipbuilders marched alongside Russian sailors stationed in the city, announcing their war weariness and their support for what the Bolsheviks in Russia hoped to achieve.[400] At the BSP's early 1918 conference, Neil Maclean made his view clear, "Most of the Socialists in Britain have concentrated on lauding the Russians for doing what they ought themselves to have done long before. The time has come to emulate the Russians and put up and enforce the British revolution."[401] On January the 27th 1919, that potential revolution, as many saw it on both sides, began on the banks of the Clyde in Glasgow with a strike called that saw 70,000 men stop work. The next day saw thousands in Glasgow's main square to see the leaders of the action speak. Glasgow effectively was under the strikers' control and a red flag was unfurled and hung in Central Square. The newspapers responded with calls for a government crackdown on the "Bolshevik-inspired strikers", with the *Glasgow Evening Times* stating its belief that the "irresistible logic inherent in the bayonet and bullet" was the only way to stop events spiralling further out of control.[402]

Winston Churchill, terrified of any form of Bolshevik agitation, now weighed into the debate in the Cabinet over what to do. To him it was clear – the only way to deal with the men of the Clyde was with force, and with this in mind he put forward the case for the tank corps to be unleashed on the streets of Glasgow: "They

[400] Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain*, p. 128
[401] The Marxist Internet Archive, BSP Conference Report 1918, p. 16 and The Marxist Internet Archive, BSP Conference Report 1918, pp. 5-17
[402] Glasgow Evening Times, 28 January 1919

(the tank corps) will be valuable in savage frontiers, and they obviously have police value in India, Ireland and at home."[403] In this strong approach, he quickly won the support of the other Hardliners in the Cabinet, notwithstanding the fact that they had acceded to the pragmatic negotiations of Lloyd George and Bonar Law over the last two years of agitation.[404] After offers to negotiate were swiftly turned down by the strikers, it was clear by the end of the second day that a climb-down was impossible, and as a result the Hardliners seemed to have the upper hand. To many in the Cabinet, this was the realisation of their worst fears: a Bolshevik-inspired uprising had now occurred on domestic soil. The only questions now were if the strikers would turn violent and, if they did, could the unrest be quickly stamped out or would it spread to the rest of the country?

By the 31st of January, the Cabinet heard reports of violence in the city centre and police were ordered to intervene. Despite horse charges and forty injured, the situation only got worse and, as the *Glasgow Times* conveyed, policy brutality seemed to have inflamed the strikers: "The square soon assumed the appearance of a miniature battlefield."[405] In London, there was semi-panic in Cabinet, with Secretary of State for Scotland Robert Munro fearing that revolution had begun in earnest and the Hardliners pushing hard for troops to be moved. It was an argument that this time they would win:

> The Secretary of State for Scotland said that in his opinion it was a misnomer to call the situation in Glasgow a strike – it was a Bolshevik uprising... There was no doubt that public opinion would support the government in quelling any disorder.... The number of troops which could be put into Glasgow at short order was about 12,000. The Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff said that 6 tanks and 100 motor Lorries with drivers were going North by rail that night.[406]

The clashes in the city centre were to last throughout the night, only stopping when the ringleaders, Gallacher and Kirkwood, were arrested, effectively ending any organised action by the strikers.[407] However, despite this victory, the policy and armed forces were faced by a series of sympathy strikes breaking out the

[403] Sheffield Telegraph, 16 March, 1919
[404] Cabinet Conclusions, 28 January 1919, CAB 23/9/8
[405] Glasgow Herald, 1 February 1919
[406] Cabinet Meeting Conclusion, 31 January 1919, CAB 23/9/10
[407] Glasgow Evening News, 1 February 1919 and William Gallacher, Revolt on the Clyde, London, 1949, pp. 231-2

next day, with thousands out across Scotland, the North and London. Following his Cabinet victory, Churchill had managed to gather 10,000 troops to enter Glasgow. Their orders were that "fire" should be "effectual" and that "it is undesirable that firing should take place over the heads of strikers or that blank cartridges should be used."[408] In London, Churchill reinforced the idea that soldiers must be prepared to fire on strikers, sending out a War Office Circular to ensure that the message was loud and clear to commanders.[409]

On the 3rd of February, the Cabinet the debate continued. The Hardliners had taken the initiative early and the use of force had in some ways been a success, but it had only worked with the more nuanced approach of arresting strike leaders. Now the moderates began to win back control, focusing on the hunger and poverty of the men on strike as a weapon and with the understanding that many were not Bolsheviks. Concessions were offered, and legal frameworks used to arrest key figures.[410] By the 4th, it had been largely concluded with Lloyd George regaining full control. Negotiations were held and some strikers' demands were met (such as the 47-hour working week).[411] It was these actions that the moderates claimed led to real change in the atmosphere in Glasgow and elsewhere, combined with the thousands of troops now stationed on the streets. With the support from workers rapidly dwindling, the numerous small revolutionary groups that had joined the Clydesiders began to split and fade away.[412] Though the violence had ended by the start of February and the main threat looked to have passed by the end of the first week, it was not until the 19th of February that the strike was officially ended.

The battle for the Clyde had represented the greatest domestic threat to the government for one hundred years. It had offered the first real chance for the militant left to push for class war and dramatic social change, but it had been defeated. In his *Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Abroad,* the Home Secretary made his view on the serious nature of the situation clear:

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[408] Strike Bulletin, 10 February 1919. The quotation is from Air Ministry Weekly Orders, Paragraphs 1380-1433, and Amendments to Kings Regulations, Orders 961 and 962. For full text see The Socialist, 6 February 1919

[409] E Shinwell, *Conflict without Malice*, London, 1965,pp, 61- 64

[410] Cabinet Conclusions, 3 February 1919, CAB 23/9/11

[411] Cabinet Conclusions, 4 February 1919, CAB 23/9/12

[412] Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain*, p. 140

> The Strikes which were threatened a fortnight ago broke out in Glasgow and spread to London. The plan of the revolutionary minority was to use the Clyde as the touchstone for a general strike, and if proved to be successful, to bring out the engineers and the railways all over the country, to seize the food and to achieve a revolution. The scheme failed.[413]

But despite this success, the divide in government was to continue to grow deeper. To some in government, the conclusion of this failure was simple: it was the decision to give no quarter to the strikers, while employing all the military and legal might that they had available, that had crushed the rebellion. To others it was, in fact, a more nuanced approach that had prevailed: the arrest of a handful of key figures, the legal measures employed and the delay in action that had led the strike to largely burn itself out, although this was more luck than judgement as the delay was due, in fact, to Churchill's marshalling of various troop formations. It was this divide in opinion that would haunt the decisions of government over the coming years, with both sides believing that their own response had been key to quelling the unrest. However, without realising it, perhaps, the Prime Minister had succeeded only through the combination of ideas that this internal debate caused. The Hardliners had got strike leaders arrested, while the moderates had avoided over-the-top military measures and allowed compromise to bring the strike to an end. One thing was certain for both sides: this was only one test in a struggle that would continue for some time. As the Head of the Metropolitan Police's Criminal Investigations Unit, Basil Thomson's, report to the Cabinet in the aftermath of the events on the Clyde shows, the question of how to deal with such events was, even in his mind, a divided one:

> We have in England a considerable body of revolutionary feeling but it is home grown... though great harm is done by hysterical speakers such as John Mclean of Glasgow, and woman like Miss Sylvia Pankhurst, on the whole it seems better to allow the whole subject of revolution to be thoroughly ventilated than attempt to suppress it... The present strike is not an industrial one. The Strike was planned in a secret meeting, attended by well-known revolutionary agitators... to make Glasgow a test strike.[414]

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[413] Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Abroad, 10 February 1919, CAB 24/75/16

[414] Memo on the Progress of Bolshevism in Europe by Basil Thomson, Scotland Yard to the Cabinet -20 February 1919 – Cab 24/75/57

It was now clear to all those of the revolutionary left of British politics that such chances would not come easily, and if one occurred again it could not be squandered in the same manner as the events on the Clyde. As Gallacher would later write, “we were carrying on a strike when we ought to have been making revolution.”[415]

The soldiers' strikes, 1919

One clear lesson that the Cabinet had learned from the Clyde was the importance of the police and military in ensuring that strike situations did not escalate to something more, though there was still a divide on just how much force would not stop unrest but provoke it. It was vital that the government maintained full control over these two bastions of state authority; any loss of control would potentially mean the end of democratic government in Britain. As events in Russia had shown, if the rank and file of the military or police moved against, or even refused to support, the government, then it would be powerless. This fear was soon to become a reality, with both the army and navy seeing unrest and strikes over the next two years. The most serious of these strikes occurred in the British military, and had been brewing since the signing of the peace with Germany in November 1918. It was born from frustration but soon gathered a momentum of its own, quickly becoming the key domestic issue for the government in 1919.

With hundreds of thousands of soldiers still under conscription months after the end of the Great War, tensions had begun to rise as early as December 1918. Most of these men were still stationed in France, with others, though returned to Britain, waiting for months in military camps for their demobilisation orders to come through. The vast majority of these soldiers wished to return to civilian life as quickly as possible; they had no desire to make soldiering their profession and, from this, frustrations were brewing.[416] As Helen B. McCartney has noted regarding the Liverpool Territorials that after the Armistice, the men felt that they had completed their task, and essentially there was no longer any incentive to endure the discomforts of army life.[417] Despite this, the fears that this unrest was more political had already started to be voiced. The fear of potential Bolshevist influence on soldiers had only increased when a number of Soldiers and Workers

[415] Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde*, p. 221
[416] I. Beckett, T. Bowman, and M. Connelly, *The British Army and the First World War*, Cambridge, 2017, p. 141
[417] H. B. McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War*, Cambridge, 2005, p. 240.

Councils had been formed in 1917.[418] As early as July of that year, Lord Derby had stated to the War Cabinet that:

> In view of the fact that the army of today is by no means as highly disciplined as that in existence before the war, and also that the classes of men serving at the present moment include individuals of every shade of education and opinion, it is probable that the movement to encourage soldiers to take part in political questions will be fanned by certain political factions for their own ends.[419]

The Cabinet were aware of the issue from its onset. Mindful of the risks in delaying the demobilisation of so many men, Lord Milner, wrote to Lloyd George, warning that "with the state of Europe and the revolutionary tendency, greater or less, in all countries, it is as dangerous to have no army as to have too big a one."[420] But despite Milner and others making their concerns known, no increase in urgency resulted. Milner again raised the issue in the Cabinet, requesting that at the very least the men should be given some concessions to keep them happy. In his words, a move that was by then "the best way out of a bad business."[421] Many in the Cabinet may also have felt a keen sense of responsibility and sympathy for the men – especially those who had served in the war or who, like Bonar Law, had lost sons to it. But the situation ignited before such a compromise could be offered. Such was the feeling among both troops and their families that an urgent memo was sent to the Prime Minister and distributed among the Cabinet warning of the risks that the lack of demobilisation was causing:

> In Liverpool and parts of Lancashire, there is a great deal of discontent, particularly among women, at the delay of demobilisation... They talk Revolution freely, but no one has yet suggested a plan by which revolution can be brought about... The extremists in Coventry are agitating for non-interference in Russian or German internal affairs. They would like to see unemployment on a large scale in hope of fanning the spark of Bolshevism in England. There has been a decline in the morale of the troops of all countries but notably the British and Americans. The chief cause of unrest is an

[418] Beckett, Bowman, Connelly, *The British Army*, 154.
[419] Memorandum by Lord Derby to the War Cabinet, 26 July 1917, CAB24/22
[420] Lloyd George Papers, Milner to Lloyd George, 13 November 1918, Lloyd George MSS. F/38/4/24
[421] Milner Papers, Diary Entry December 1918, MS. Milner, dep. 90.

un-perfect understanding of the conditions of demobilisation.[422]

In the months following the Armistice, a series of rumours circulated amongst the troops suggesting that the delays were in fact intentional, with the government's aim to ensure an army remained ready for possible intervention in Russia.[423]

The Cabinet were also aware that these rumours were in part fuelled by Russian propaganda – something the left seemed proud of, as *The Socialist* noted: "Literature does reach the shore of England from Russia… our government will find out [the consequences] when the troops return to this country."[424] The mainstream press was also now sensing the mood and despite its previous rabid anti-Bolshevik feeling, even the *Daily Mail* declared: "We are convinced that nobody in this country, except a few financiers with extensive international connections, cares one continental fig about how much Germany Bolshevises." The *Daily Express* too stated that, "The Daily Express says quite frankly that the British Empire has for the moment done enough... We are not the schoolmasters of Russia."[425]

It was an issue that was not going away, and for Lloyd George in late 1918 it was one he could not afford to ignore, as Sir Robert Sanders recorded him reflecting upon in his diary: "[LG has] prophesied great unpopularity for the Government during the period of demobilisation and said if we had an election in the Spring, we might get a Bolshevik Government."[426] For the Prime Minister, 1919 would see the Versailles Peace talks and the looming shadow of war with Russia, a most pressing issue: the loss of control among the army could spell disaster for his government, and indeed the nation.[427] The next year started in the same vein with the *Daily Express* asking in a headline "Are we to be committed to a war with Russia?" and commenting that "The frozen plains of Eastern Europe are not worth the bones of a single British Grenadier."[428]

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[422] Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad, 30 December 1918, CAB 24/73/3
[423] Rothstein, *The Soldiers Strikes of 1919*, p.31
[424] The Socialist, 12 June, 1919
[425] The Daily Mail, 22nd November 1918; The Daily Express, 28th December, 1918
[426] John Ramsden (ed), *'Real Old Tory Politics: The Political Diaries of Sir Robert Sanders, Lord Bayford, 1910-1935', London, 1984, Entry for 20 Oct. 1918 and 8th May 1919*
[427] John Ramsden, The Age of Balfour and Baldwin, 1902-1940, 1978, p. 133
[428] The Daily Express, 3 January, 1919

All across the country, insubordination was now occurring; it began with small protests but as news spread, so too did the discontent, and by mid-January thousands of soldiers were refusing to follow orders. The first of the large-scale demobilisation strikes had occurred near Folkestone and Dover on the 3rd of January. It was peaceful and they eventually disbanded, but the next day saw new orders for troops to be sent to France and the protests started again.[429] By the 8th, it had spread across the south, with men on strike in Kent, Maidstone, Sussex and Hampshire; some 8,000 in Shoreham and 5,000 in Southampton alone put down their arms.[430] The Hardliners were the loudest voices – indeed the only ones being heard. On the 7th of January, Milner wrote to the Prime Minister and stated that "military insubordination is becoming very grave... I am firmly convinced... drastic action will be necessary if we are to prevent a state of general disorder."[431] He made the same point when the Cabinet met the following day. Churchill, as Secretary of State for War, was told to deal with the situation. But there was disagreement over how, and the fear of too many men coming home unemployed all at once was a very keen one.[432] Sir Henry Wilson told Lloyd George on the 6th of January to "make it clear to the country that the war is not over and that we are demobilizing fast enough."[433] Wilson on the 8th was also advising the Prime Minister that a strong hand was needed, stating in his diary: "I told Lloyd George plainly what I thought – he must come out in the open at once and back the War Office and the officers. He must crush out the poisonous part of the press. He must say the War is not over."[434]

The situation was so grave that the troops remaining loyal were described as "a large proportion of young soldiers with little training, insufficient military discipline... and of little value if split up into small detachments."[435] The Prime Minister, however, was still torn, unsure of what action to take and wary of inflaming the matter. Churchill later recorded after the war just how difficult the balancing act was:

> I was immediately confronted with conditions of critical emergency... the discipline of every single separate unit throughout the whole of our army in all theatres of war was swiftly rotted and

[429] The Herald, 11th January, 1919
[430] Daily Telegraph, 7 and 8 January, 1919 and The Globe (London), 7th January, 1919
[431] Lloyd George Archives, Letter from Milner to Lloyd George, 7 January 1919, LG F/39/1/5
[432] Cabinet Conclusions, 8 January 1918, CAB 23/9/1
[433] Wilson Diary, 6 January 1919, as seen in Callwell, Sir Henry Wilson life and Diaries, London, 1927, p. 161
[434] Cited in Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour*, p. 28
[435] Cabinet Memo by Winston Churchill, The Capacity of the Army to Assist the Civil Power in Industrial Disturbances, 7 January 1920, CAB 24/96/59

> undermined […] In a single week more than thirty cases of insubordination amongst the troops were reported from different centres, nearly all were repressed or appeased... But in several cases considerable bodies of men were for some days entirely out of control.[436]

He tried to react as best he could, scrapping the War Office demobilisation scheme, bringing in rapid-release clauses for some men and pay increases for others, but it was to prove too little, too late.[437]

The strikes continued to escalate; 4,000 marchers protested outside Downing Street on the 9th and thousands more joined strikes across London, the Midlands, Wales and even Calais.[438] It was a situation that Field Marshall Wilson would later describe as the only point when he felt that the government could fall, and be replaced by Bolshevism or anarchy.[439] The Cabinet met on the 10th and the debate continued; due to the issue at hand, even the Hardliners clearly were not advocating the use of large-scale force (indeed, there was no armed forces to use); however, they were stronger in their advocation that loyal troops be used to shore up important areas, arrest ringleaders and threaten harsh punishments for those committing violence or spreading sedition. Clearly, they believed that the flames were being fanned by extremists, Bolsheviks and Moscow, with good men in hard conditions being led astray as a result. The moderates, led by Lloyd George, were not seeing the situation in the same light – to them this was an issue of boredom, war-weariness and men merely wanting to return home.[440]

On the 13th, they received a report on the situation that made for grim reading, though for the Hardliners it was a clear sign that their fears were well-grounded in fact.

> They [extremists] are snatching at the opportunity offered by the unrest in the army to further corrupt its morale in the hope of bringing revolution nearer… It would be foolish to make light of the serious effect of the recent demonstrations by soldiers... the recent demonstrations and the police strike show how a determined minority of extremists can stamp the quiet man into insubordination.

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[436] Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis, Vol IV. The Aftermath*, London, 1929, p. 61
[437] Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain*, p.189
[438] Daily Mail, 8 January, 1919; Pall Mall Gazette, 8th January, 1919, Daily Telegraph, 9 January 1919; Manchester Guardian, 9 January, 1919
[439] Callwell, *Field Marshall Henry Wilson, Vol II*, p. 161
[440] Cabinet Conclusions, 10 January 2019, CAB 23/9/2

More and more bases were reporting unrest, including now the RAF and Royal Medical Corps.[441] Reports were reaching Churchill of clear Bolshevik involvement, one report describing in Wales how rioting soldiers shouted "Come on you Bolsheviks" led by a "man who carried the Red Flag" and clashed with loyal troops, resulting in a number of casualties.[442] Hearing that more trouble was occurring in Calais, Churchill reacted, ordering machine gun detachments to surround the camp and arrest the leaders. General Haig wanted to shoot the arrested men for desertion, stating "discipline must be maintained, and rioters if they cannot be arrested must be shot. Those men who have returned from leave have no ground for complaint and appear to have been led astray by Bolshevik agitators".[443] Here Churchill showed restraint, ordering Haig down and remaining deeply concerned about the trouble this form of reaction would cause at home.[444] This matter and others were discussed at the Cabinet meeting on the 24th. Sir William Robertson, Commander of the Home Forces, had informed the Prime Minister that he felt the men's grievances were legitimate and that the best course of action was to address them. Lloyd George agreed, arguing that a meeting with the key figures from the soldier groups would be a productive way forward.[445]

However, worse news soon came to the Cabinet when the Navy too began to see strikes amongst its crews. In one case, sailors hauled the Red Flag to the masthead of HMS Kilbride, stationed at Milford Haven, and declared: "Half the Navy are on Strike and the other half soon will be."[446] The importance of the Navy to the government cannot be underestimated – the military force described by one Cabinet member as "Our Praetorian Guard" and a force which was integral to any defence of the realm. It was similarly described by *the Times* as "an essential component of Britain's external and internal security system."[447] If the Royal Navy's reliability was in question, then the whole future of the British Nation and Empire was also in doubt. By the beginning of April, the far Left were also hopeful that this could spark revolution. Sylvia Pankhurst, in a speech to the Labour Club in Rugby, said "It is hopeful that the soldiers and sailors are beginning to feel

[441] The Times, 13 January 1919 and Western Daily Press, Bristol, 13th January 1919
[442] Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour*, p. 32
[443] G. De Groot, *Douglas Haig, 1861-1928*, London, 1988, 401–2.
[444] Gilbert, Churchill, IV, pp - 192-3
[445] Cabinet Conclusions, January 24th 1919, CAB 23/9/6
[446] The Times 28 January 1919, The Times, 30 January 1919
[447] S. Freemantle, *My Naval Career*, London, 1949, p. 262

the spirit of revolt, because if we get the soldiers, sailors and policemen with us we shall be able to take control of the country very quickly and without bloodshed".[448]

Despite this, the path had been set and again the moderates won out, though the fact that all in the Cabinet were terrified by the loss of control in the army and the fact that it hamstrung the Hardliners (removed the option of using the military to restore order) meant that the debate was not a vicious one. Force had been used on a couple of occasions, but the policy of negotiation and compromise was proving much more effective across the country. However, despite this agreement, the Hardliners were still making their objections to large scale concessions known. Lord Milner thought it would be a "bad precedent" to set and argued that repercussions were necessary to avoid future problems occurring. In this ,he was backed by Churchill and Wilson.[449] Churchill also argued that press censorship should be lifted – something he believed would reduce the flow of false rumours. It was a change in policy he would get. However, overall it was the pragmatists who won out, with an agreement that negotiations would take place, that concessions would be offered on demobilisation speed, and that assurances would be given that there would be no Russian draft. These were measures they had pushed for as the strike began and remained the same as it ended.[450]

These negotiations were a success, and troops returned to duty. Churchill, though, remained unhappy, growing increasingly concerned that the strikes would re-occur, potentially spreading into a wider rebellion led by British Bolsheviks. To find out if this was a risk, he had his department, the War Office, send out a confidential questionnaire to the commanding officers of all units, with the aim of ascertaining whether or not it was thought that the troops would remain loyal in the case of revolution in England.[451] He then went on to recall the Guards Division from Germany as a precaution against any such unrest occurring, only relaxing the following May when the questionnaires came back showing that the troops could generally be expected to stand firm.[452] It was an on-going concern for him, and one that he would raise in the Cabinet over the months to follow. The issue of troop loyalty was one that concerned others too; the Chief of the General Staff warned later that year that the army's limited ability to act in a crisis gave "grave cause for anxiety and

[448] Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, 7 April 1919. CAB24/77/93
[449] Cabinet Conclusions, January 28 1919, CAB 23/9/8
[450] Cabinet Conclusion, 8 January 1919, CAB 23/9/1: Cabinet Conclusions, 28 January 1919, CAB 23/9/8
[451] House of Commons Debate,,29 May 1919, Vol 115, cols, 1600-2, 14-15 May 1919
[452] House of Commons Debate, 29 May 1919 Vol 116 cols 1469-539

prohibited its employment except as a military force to be used only in the last extremity."[453]

There was also reassurance from government operatives infiltrated among the men that the troops themselves were not aiming for revolution. But with these reports was a warning that others sought to change this. One such report stated that "the recent indiscipline of the men returning from France on leave seems to have no connection with the revolutionary movement. There is however evidence to show that agitators have been busy among soldiers." One such address to soldiers by a man who claimed to have been involved in the Folkestone protests stated that: "If you men in uniform will combine with the workers, we will then be the strongest party in the country."[454] The War Office estimated that it had only 25,000 troops available of the 40,000 men considered necessary for homeland security. With this uncertainty remaining, and under pressure from the Hardliners, it was decided to create a much stronger secret service, with a new committee established on the risk of insurrection, on the recommendation of the First Lord of the Admiralty and Secret Service operatives:

> I am no alarmist, and no pessimist, but I firmly believe that the elements of unrest, and what we call Bolshevism, are more general and more deep-seated, than many of us believe, and that if we want to avoid the same kind of trouble that has occurred in other countries we must not be content merely to demobilise... we must be vigilant and above all we must have an efficient, well-paid Secret Service on the civil side under and responsible to a Minister who can bring the facts to the notice of the Cabinet as they arise.[455]

Despite these concerns, once again, under the leadership of Lloyd George and Bonar Law, the more hard-line Conservative members of the Cabinet had backed down on the extreme measures they had pushed for. Again, a middle way had been found. It must be noted that, when compared with the Clyde, the difference in situation is clear. The majority of soldiers were not resorting to violence and any attempt to send soldiers against their fellow enlisted men risked losing the loyalty of all soldiers. Despite this, the Hardliners of the Cabinet had still pushed for a military response in some form – one which could well have led to a rebellion

[453] Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain*, p. 190
[454] Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Abroad, 10 February 1919, CAB 24/75/16
[455] Memo on Secret Service and formation of Insurrection Committee by W.H Long, 16 January 1919, CAB 24/73/65

of a much more serious nature. That said, they had seen the risk, and Winston Churchill later wrote of his fears at the time:

> There were factors which nobody could measure and which no one had ever before seen at work. Armies of nearly four million men had been suddenly and consciously released from the iron discipline of war, from the inexorable compulsions of what they believed to be a righteous cause, all these vast numbers had been taught for years how to kill... If these armies formed united resolve, if they were seduced from the standards and duty of patriotism, there was no power which could even have attempted to withstand them.[456]

What now weighed heavily on the minds of many in the government was that without the support of the military, the country would surely descend into revolution and anarchy. Only the police could be seen as a force with anywhere near the importance of the army, and by 1919 they too had become increasingly militant.

The police strikes, 1918 - 1919

While the army seethed in mutinous resentment at the slow pace of demobilisation, the other force of law and order was also locked in a struggle with the government – a clash that would lead to the police going on strike twice before 1919 ended. Resentment had been building up for some time; wartime cuts had seen the standard of living for a police officer drop dramatically over the previous five years, and with the National Union of Police and Prison Officers (NUPPO) officially illegal, there was little recourse to turn to.[457] The leadership was also lacking. Police Commissioner, Sir Edward Henry, an ex-civil servant, was not the man to deal with such a complex situation, and Home Secretary Sir George Cave was said to be only there while waiting for the "first highest judicial vacancy" to come available.[458]

The first strike was to occur while war continued on the Western Front. On the 25th of August 1918, the

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[456] Cited in Winston Churchill, *The Aftermath*, p. 60
[457] Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour*, p. 53
[458] Lord Riddell, *War Diary: 1915-1918*, London, 1933, entry for 10 December 1916

situation came to a head in Hammersmith, where police officer Tommy Thiel, a Boer war veteran and former Brigade of Guards drill sergeant, was sacked due to his work as a union representative. Within two days, an ultimatum was issued asking for pay increases, union recognition and the reinstatement of Thiel. Reaching Scotland Yard on the 28th of August, it was taken to Henry, but he was on holiday. The Home Secretary, unsure of how to proceed, decided to wait it out. Confident that no mutiny would occur, he retired to his country house in Somerset. On the 29th of August, the strike began with the great bulk of police in the capital, estimated at 12,000 men, joining the picket line. Only the CID and special constabulary were not involved and the government was forced to deploy 600 loyal soldiers to key areas in London.[459]

The Cabinet met the next day, with Lloyd George having been forced to fly home from France on the 29th. The Prime Minister called for pragmatic negotiation and limited concessions, even asking Labour MP Charles Duncan (honorary president of NUPPO) to aid with the talks. On Duncan's suggestion, it was also agreed that the strikers would be offered a deal to ensure that they returned to duty.[460] In this, he had the support of the majority of the Cabinet, who had been made aware of the gravity of the situation when addressed by the Assistant Police Commissioner that day.[461] With the possibility of escalation, even the Hardliners agreed to some form of a deal being offered, though for many the continued existence of the Police Union was a bridge too far. All supported a police pay increase, with many expressing confusion as to why this had not been offered earlier. Colonial Secretary Walter Long declared to Bonar Law that "[surely] the Police are entitled to extra pay".[462] Lord Milner agreed, showing deviation from his hard-line approach to the military strikes (perhaps proving that the pay and working conditions that the police were facing were notably unfair), arguing that the situation could become a very dangerous one if no deal was struck. He recorded in his diary that night that the "Police Strike looks ugly."[463]

With the Cabinet agreed, a deal was offered, but it was soon after rejected by the police negotiators. Lloyd George called a meeting with the police leaders for that afternoon – something he informed the Cabinet

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[459] Gerald Reynolds and Anthony Judge, '*The Night the Police went on Strike'*, London, 1968, p. 42; Douglas C. Browne, '*The Rise of Scotland Yard,'* London, 1956, pp. 303-4

[460] Grigg, Lloyd George, War Leader, p.583

[461] War Cabinet and Cabinet Minutes, 30 August 1918, CAB 23/7/30

[462] War Cabinet and Cabinet Minutes, 30 August 1918, CAB 23/7/29

[463] Bodleian Oxford, Milner Papers, Diary Entry 30 August 1918, MS. Milner dep. 89

about only after it was organised. The war Cabinet met that morning – the Prime Minister, Milner, Law, Cave, and Wilson – and were joined by General Sir Cecil Macready who had been appointed Commissioner of Police that month to replace Edwards. Here, a more militant line was taken by the Hardliners. Wilson stated that if another deal was rejected, then "they should be put in the trenches", later also stating that they "ought to be conscripted and made to carry out their police duties as soldiers."[464] He went on to argue that the deployment of troops as strike-breakers was now the only option.[465] But this view was tempered by Bonar Law and the Prime Minister, both of whom saw the risk that any such action would have in terms of a real rebellion. With the support of Law and Cave, the Prime Minister skilfully ended the debate by stating that "the decision as to the action to be taken should be postponed until he had seen the men's representatives... until he had ascertained the temper of the men it would be premature to reach a decision."[466]

At noon, the police representation reached Downing Street, and Lloyd George offered them the new deal. On condition that the strike ended immediately, a new pay deal would be agreed and Thiel could be reinstated. A deal was struck. Cave offered to resign but was persuaded not to. As the dust settled over the police strikes in 1918, a few things become clear. Perhaps most importantly, it could well have turned into a major crisis had Lloyd George not acted so quickly, and so tactfully, to stop it. With men such as Carmichael, considered a militant, at the head of the so-called Police Union, a long-term strike was a real possibility – something that would have turned into a crisis had large-scale sympathy strikes occurred across the country at the direction of other unions. Combined with the situation in the armed forces, the Prime Minister had averted grave disaster for the country. As George Riddell, a close friend of Lloyd George, recalls, the occupants of Downing Street felt that they were "face to face with revolution."[467] It was a dangerous time for the government and one that was not yet over.

In December 1918, the Cabinet were again receiving reports of police sedition. One stated clearly: "In the event of a serious labour disturbance the Police in large cities cannot be depended upon… In the event of

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[464] Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour*, p. 56
[465] Keith Wilson, *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, 1918–1922*, 1985
[466] War Cabinet and Cabinet Minutes, 31 August 1918, CAB 23/17/27
[467] Riddell, *War Diary: 1915-1918*, August 1918

strike disturbances the police will not actively join the strikers, but will quietly neglect to do their duty."[468] In the same month, Hankey wrote to Bonar Law to warn him that a strike was due to occur soon unless major changes occurred.[469] With this in mind, Macready began to prepare for future strikes from the onset of his new role, hoping that it would allow those militants still in the force to be dealt with once and for all. In a letter to the Prime Minister in January 1919, he wrote that he was preparing for a strong counter-strike in the case of any new police action – something that he had Churchill's total support for:

> I am certain that if anything of the sort is attempted we can stamp it out at once, and in that case get rid once and for all of these firebrands together with the Union... It is possible that the firebrands may try to get them out (on strike), and that a few hundred may follow their lead, but, if we strike quickly without an hour's delay on the lines, which I have laid before Lord Cave and since then Mr. Shortt and discussed with Mr. Churchill, I feel sure that ninety per cent of the Force will carry on.[470]

The Hardliners, though in rough agreement with the current deal, made it clear that in the case of any future agitation, no further concessions should be given for fear of undermining the government's authority. Lloyd George remained cautious, but it is clear from a note to Macready from Bonar Law that the Conservative Leader was being swayed towards a stronger stance: "The Prime Minister is prepared to support any steps you may take, however grave, to establish the authority of social order."[471] Despite these fears, by January 1919 the situation seemed to have calmed. Given the situation now occurring in the army, this was a great relief. As Macready wrote, it would have been impossible to deal with a large-scale police strike at the turn of the year "without recourse to the military" – something they simply could not rely on.[472] Feeling strengthened by Macready's preparations in March, the Cabinet officially made public its decision to continue to not recognise the Police Union – a decision swayed by the Hardliners.

In retrospect, this decision was to prove a foolish one. Angry at what they perceived as a broken promise and public humiliation, the NUPPO leadership began to prepare for a new struggle. By May, they were ready to

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[468] Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisation in the UK, and Morale Abroad, 2 December 1918, CAB 24/71/25
[469] Parliamentary Archives, Bonar Law Papers, Hankey to Law, BL/84/4/26
[470] Lloyd George Archive, Macready to Lloyd George, 23 January 1919, LG F/36/2/5 and 6
[471] Lloyd George Archive, Copy of telephone message to Bonar Law, 27 January 1919, LG F/30/3/8
[472] Wrigley, Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour, p. 66

take action, and in London over 9,000 policemen marched in protest to Trafalgar Square. In Cabinet, there was again debate over how to respond, with many worried about the strike spreading. First Lord of the Admiralty Walter Long, wrote to Lloyd George: "The men in the navy are watching the action of the London police very closely, and that any mistake made here would have serious consequences among them."[473] It was also clear to the Cabinet that it was not only the Navy that was watching the events. That month's report on the revolutionary threat had noted that even with some military support, the situation was a tense one: "The police are taking a secret ballot in favour, or against, strikes all over the country... the Triple Alliance has promised to come out in sympathy if soldiers are used in place of the police."[474] Bonar Law was concerned enough to write to Lloyd George, stating his hopes it would come to nothing without any extreme measures needing to be taken.[475]

In July 1919, the NUPPO finally made its move and an official strike was called with the previous perceived injustices listed, adding to them their complaints about the Police Bill going through Parliament at the time – a piece of legislation that sought to, among other things, make police strikes a criminal offence. But despite, or perhaps because of, the government's readiness for conflict, it was a damp squib; in London a mere 1,000 men joined the strike, all of whom were later dismissed.[476] Similar numbers were seen around the country with only Liverpool seeing large numbers joining the strike. It was here that the very real fears of the government would be realised as the population, which had for years suffered extreme poverty, took the opportunity to riot. With crowds in the city looting, the army was sent in, leading to running battles between the opposing sides through the city's streets. Hundreds were injured and one protester was shot dead.[477] The situation was so serious that two cruisers, the *Venomous* and the *Whitley,* and a battleship, the *Valiant,* were sent to the Mersey.[478]

The situation was dealt with, but the vision of real revolution had been ingrained in the heads of Cabinet member and union leader alike, as Lloyd George later wrote to Sir Archibald Salvidge (Chairman of the

[473] Parliamentary Archives, The Lloyd George Papers, Walter H. Long, Admiralty, to the Prime Minister, 28 May 1919, LG/F/33/2/46
[474] Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad, 28 May 1919, CAB 24/80/68
[475] Parliamentary Archives, The Bonar Law Papers, Law to LG, 31 May 1919, BL/101/3/92
[476] Cabinet Conclusions, Appendix 'Police Order', 1 August 1919, CAB 23/11/19
[477] Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour*, p. 75
[478] Cabinet Minutes, 10 July 1919, CAB 23/11/5

Liverpool Constitutional Association): "Had Liverpool been wrongly handled and had the strikers scored a success, the whole country might very soon have been on fire."[479] The overall result of the police strikes in 1919 was clear – a victory for the government, leading to dismissal for disloyal officers and a much-reformed police force.[480] Lloyd George had stayed calm, helped by regular updates from Macready.[481] It also seems clear that the main grievances were those of pay and conditions, not a wish for revolution, as a Home Office report to Cabinet argued:

> There is a prevailing belief that the Police Strikes were engineered by the revolutionaries in this country as a prelude to a general attempt to upset the social order. I believe this to only be partially true. The real cause of the strike was the certitude in the minds of the leaders that if the police bill became law the Police Union, from which they draw their salaries, would cease to exist within three months.[482]

In spite of this, the events in Liverpool had shown just how close to real rebellion and revolution the country had come. The uncertainty of having so many of the police on strike could easily have led to a loss of government control. All that would have been necessary for the situation to have dangerously spiralled was one wrong decision by the government, a strong union position leading to mass sympathy strikes, or even just the police strike occurring at the same time as the military's. Any and all of those events could potentially have led to the perfect situation for those of a revolutionary mindset to bang the drums that would have led to a British Civil War. It was once again down to the victory of the moderates in the Cabinet debates that had moved the situation towards a peaceful conclusion. All had seen the potential of the threat, but while Curzon, Milner and Churchill pushed for a strong response, they had been outmanoeuvred by Lloyd George and his allies, though some of their measures such as refusal to recognise the union had been maintained. With men like Law, Cave and later Shortt on the Prime Minister's side, an agreement had been reached with the striking police – one that would be vital in the continued public unrest that would occur up until 1926.

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[479] Stanley Salvidge, *Salvidge of Liverpool; behind the political scene, 1890-1928*, London, 1934, p. 177
[480] G. Dilnot, *Scotland Yard 1829-1929*, London, 1956, pp. 129-42
[481] Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Papers, Various reports by General Macready on the police strike, August 1919, LG/F/186/4/9
[482] Fortnightly Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad, 7 August 1919, CAB 24/86/35

Conclusion

In the Cabinet, the two years of domestic difficulties had begun to cement the factions that had appeared at the onset of the troubles. The debates over Russian intervention, discussed above, served to both exacerbate and harden them further. The pragmatic members of the Cabinet, such as Chamberlain and Law with the support of the Prime Minister, had retained the ascendency, successfully dealing with a number of major confrontations through dialogue and compromise. But the Hardliners, too, had been allowed to remain in the political picture, with Churchill, Curzon and Wilson instrumental in the quashing of the Clyde rebellion and arguing for harsher measures throughout the events of 1917-1919. It is clear that no definitive government policy on how to approach these increasingly serious domestic revolts had been formulated. Instead, a flexible response, based on the Cabinet's internal debates, had been allowed to continue – one that proved the Hardliners' position and relative power in Cabinet through the compromise they created through existing. The membership of both factions remained largely the same over this period with the key figures continuing to dominate Cabinet debate and joined by other Cabinet members in specific events. The Hardliners were a small but unified and politically powerful faction and the key moderates were similar but with the tacit support of the much larger silent section of the Cabinet. This group, as discussed, was most likely not motivated by the issue in question but by party and personal loyalty to the PM, self-interest and Cabinet collective responsibility once a decision was made.

However, this approach had worked and, though hardly deliberate, the middle-way approach again had defused two dangerous situations. The revolt on the Clyde had forced the Prime Minister to allow the Hardliners major concessions to keep his Cabinet unified: here they had been allowed to call out troops and arrest the key strikers. Despite this, however, Lloyd George had also kept control of the situation, holding back the military from any excessive violence and opening a conciliatory dialogue with the mass of men on strike, calling for calm and offering the chance for a return to work without unnecessary punishment through job loss or legislation. It was this middle-way approach that was to continue in the other challenges of the years ahead – most notably the soldiers' and police strikes. With these events, once again the Hardliners called for a strong and militant response, but Lloyd George and his allies averted the need with sensible concessions. Realising quickly that the soldiers on strike were not revolutionaries but homesick and war-

weary, a real deal on demobilisation was offered – one based on length of time served. To keep Churchill and his allies on side, this was balanced with acceptance that the military police should be given free rein to detain and prosecute any figures in the striking forces that called for more radical unrest. The same policy was adopted with the striking police – a deal again was offered and yet to keep the Cabinet onside, it would not include any recognition of the Police Union. Therefore, once again in this period, we see the use and effectiveness of a third-way policy, combining moderation with selected hard-line policies, resulting in an effective *via media*. At no point does the pursuit of moderation weaken the government, which could have encouraged more unrest and with it more power for the extreme elements on the left, nor is it excessive to the point of provoking the same reaction from an angered working-class population.

Chapter 5: "Where are those Communists? Let us hear them" – Domestic Unrest, 1920 – 1924

"The whole future of the country might be at stake, if the government were beaten and the miners won it would result in Soviet Government.[483]" – Lloyd George

The events of 1919 had shocked those in government; it had been a year of strikes and protests, and one that had seen both the armed forces and police take to the streets. To Austen Chamberlain, the situation was made worse by the recent rise of the Labour Party in British politics – a force he saw as a "serious menace to the nation... because of its difference from every other party... in being directed and controlled from outside Parliament."[484] As he and others in the Cabinet grappled with the fact that even the defenders of the state – the police and armed forces – had joined those on the picket lines, strikes continued to occur across the nation.

In 1919, it had been the railwaymen, and though the strike was short-lived it saw an important change in the reaction of the government, who now seemed more organized and more determined than ever to see off any threat of Bolshevik-inspired revolution. Lloyd George had been warned at the start of the year and was well-prepared.[485] The Cabinet discussed the threat in September and plans were drawn up to use emergency powers and the military as necessary.[486] An Industrial Unrest Committee was established, which would meet regularly over the strike, from which the Prime Minister received regular updates.[487] As Lloyd George later described, now it was not just the War Secretary (Churchill) but the whole Cabinet who were taking this seriously.[488] It was a period of calm in terms of Cabinet clashes with both sides supportive of the mix of negotiation and use of limited force that the PM proposed and kept informed regularly of progress; on later negotiations, the Hardliners remained quiet.[489] In the end, the approach worked and the strike was over

[483] Cabinet Minutes, 26 July 1919, CAB 23/11/14
[484] Austen Chamberlain Papers, A Chamberlain to R Cecil, 26 April 1921, Chamberlain MSS, AC 24/3/16
[485] Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Papers, Letter from Eric Geddes to LG on Railway Unrest, 18 January 1919, LG/F/18/3/4
[486] Cabinet Minutes, 24 September 1919, CAB 23/12/8
[487] For example see Lloyd George Papers, 29th meeting of Industrial Unrest Committee, 25 September 1919, LG/F/187/3/1 and for his regular updates, Lloyd George Papers, Special Report on [Strike] Progress, 29 September 1919, LG/F/187/5/4
[488] George Glasgow, *General Strikes and Road Transport*, London, 1926
[489] Lloyd George Papers, Railway Strike Negotiations Cabinet Summary, 2 October 1919, LG/F/187/3/3 and Government Conditions for A Truce, 7

within nine days and after some limited concessions on wages were agreed by Lloyd George.

As 1920 arrived, there was agreement in the corridors of Whitehall that the threat of more strikes and possible Bolshevik interference was growing greater. Added to this, there was a realisation that a large-scale clash would soon come with the unions and the militant section of the working class. The visit of British trade unionists and members of the Labour Party to Soviet Russia, continued threats by the Trades Union Congress that any British action against Russia would be resisted by organised Labour, and the growth of the British Communist Party all combined to create what would now be described as a red scare in the government and across Britain.[490]

Sylvia Pankhurst and other agitators continued to push for revolution: "Where indeed, are to be found Communist Party representatives on local bodies using their position on the bodies in a revolutionary way? Where are those Communists? Let us hear of them."[491] Back in Whitehall, even children were viewed with suspicion: one of the now monthly Home Office reports on *Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad* described how indoctrination was taking place from a young age: "The Sunday meeting of the Battersea School was attended by about 80 children, who reply 'yes comrade' when the register was called and recited the Socialist Commandments. The children have a special Socialist hymn book and are generally imbued with revolutionary ideas."[492] It was in this atmosphere of mistrust and fear that the British Communist Party was coming to the fore. The chairman, Arthur MacManus, who was previously a member of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), made clear that violence may be a price worth paying: "We believe that a social revolution is absolutely essential, and that it is our duty to get it however much we may be soiled in the process. Even if there arises a necessity for bloodshed."[493]

As is clear in hindsight, the ability of the fledgling party to achieve any such a grand aim was both unrealistic and against the wishes of the majority of those in Great Britain. However, its ability to stoke the fires of

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Oct 1919, LG/F/187/4/16

[490] Stephen White, British Labour in Soviet Russia, 1920, *EHR*, 119. 432, (1994), 621-40; L. J. Macfarlane, *Hands off Russia: British Lab*our and the Russo-Polish War, 1920, London, 1968, pp. 126-52; Andrew Thorpe, The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1945, HJ, 43, 3 (2000), 777-800

[491] Workers Dreadnought, 24 September 1921

[492] Indoctrination of Children Memo, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad, 30 September 1920, CAB 24/112/8

[493] The Marxist Internet Archive, Communist Unity Convention Report, 1920, p. 5

unrest that were already roaring through the nation, and its ability to harness existing grievances in the hope of intensifying them, should not be overlooked. All it might have taken for that fire to overwhelm the state itself was one mistake and, with the Hardliners beginning to once again push for strong action, including the ever-aggressive Churchill now in charge of the military response to industrial unrest, it was a mistake that, for some, looked increasingly likely.

Hands Off Russia, the last year of intervention, and Polish Aid

On the streets, the 'Hands Off Russia' protests were becoming a major concern. First organised by the National Hands Off Russia Committee on the 18th of September 1919, it was a group united around the call for the withdrawal of troops from Russia but also a wider mission to end the support of anti-Bolshevik forces both inside and outside Russia.[494] At first it seemed that, as the debates in Parliament on intervention came to an end, the opposition groups set up by the far left in Britain had lost their cause, but this was not to be the case. Instead, it was to become a point of deep concern for a government that was ever wary of domestic unrest, with the group even advocating for revolution if their aims were not met.[495]

Lloyd George saw the danger, describing the rise as "a great inflammable industrial population."[496] He advocated that the horrors of bolshevism must be better articulated to the people. Churchill, too, pushed such a policy, arguing that all efforts should be made to portray Russia in a way that would undo the propaganda of the Hands Off Russia Campaign. In one speech to the people of his constituency in Dundee, he made clear his view, describing the situation in the East of Europe in brutal terms: "The Bolsheviks hop and caper like troops of ferocious baboons, amid the ruins of cities and the corpses of their victims."[497] Lloyd George too seemed torn between the threats domestically and internationally, telling the Commons in 1919 that helping Poland may be a viable policy, in order to "arrest this flow of lava… to prevent the forcible eruption of Bolshevism into allied lands."[498] As early as January 1919, the War Cabinet had been aware of the danger

[494] Hands Off Russia Committee, Peace with Soviet Russia, London 1920, p. 5
[495] Stephen White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution 1920 - 1924*, p.36; Workers Dreadnought, 25 January 1919; Pollitt, Serving my Time, pp. 94-5
[496] Cabinet Conclusions, 14 November 1918, CAB 23/8/23
[497] Cited in Gilbert, *Winston S Churchill*, IV, p. 226
[498] House of Commons Debate, 16 April 1919, Vol 114, cols. 2942-4

Poland was in. One telegram to Cabinet from Lord Cecil on the 10th warned that Poland may "cease to exist in a few weeks." Churchill, Curzon and the Hardliners demanded support, but Lloyd George and Chamberlain disagreed and no aid was sent.[499] By 1920, with outright victory for either side in Poland looking unlikely, the British Government now had to address the situation, including calls for a general strike if Britain intervened.

On the 10th of May 1920, the situation escalated when dockers refused to load arms/supplies for the Poles onto the ship, the *Jolly George*, citing their objection to the on-going attacks on Bolshevik Russia as their reason – something described by government reports as the actions of extremists.[500] The Labour Party and TUC announced their full support and by the end of June threats were made of potential General Strike action if the Government continued to offer financial, material or any other form of support for Poland in its conflict with the Bolsheviks.[501] Such was the pressure on the Prime Minister that despite regular correspondence with ally and French military chief Marshal Foch, he was unable to respond with full support to the latter's requests for British help in Poland.[502] The press too were playing a part with the traditional papers supporting the government and the *Herald* claiming "the marionettes are in Warsaw but the strings are being pulled from London and Paris".[503]

By August, a Russian counter-attack against the Poles saw a huge swing in the conflict. As Polish forces retreated back towards their capital, spearhead Russian infantry and cavalry detachments had reached the banks of the River Vistula; in front of them lay the spires and grand boulevards of Warsaw. It seemed that the war had likely already been won. Lord Curzon the Foreign Secretary sent a letter to Russia on the 3rd of August 1920, threatening war if the advance of the Red Army was not held on the so-called Curzon Line and peace talks begun. The response was a firm refusal.[504] Curzon was furious, writing to Lloyd George to point

499 Cabinet Conclusions, 10 January 1919, CAB 23/9/2

500 The Jolly George, 'Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad', 13 May 1920, CAB 24/105/81

501 The Times, 14 May 1920 and Alan Bullock, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin vol. 1, London, 1966, pp. 133-4; David Marquand, 'Ramsey MacDonald', London, p. 85

502 Note of a Conversation between the Prime Minister and Marshall Foch in regard to Poland, 3 July 1920, CAB 23/35/16

503 New Statesman, 8 May 1920, p. 117, and 15 May 1920, p.149

504 Jerzy Borzęcki, *The Soviet-Polish peace of 1921 and the Creation of Interwar Europe*, p. 79–81 and Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, pp. 81-82

out that Russia had broken all previous pledges made and arguing that Britain could not stand by.[505] Lloyd George was opposed to war for three key reasons: he was angry at the Polish aggression early in the war; he was concerned at what involvement would mean in terms of public unrest at home; and lastly, he was wary that British involvement in the East may push other nations towards Russia.[506] In the Cabinet, the Prime Minister and Austen Chamberlain led those who called for calm, acutely aware of the anger among the Hands Off Russia protesters at Curzon's ultimatum; however, for others such as Churchill and Curzon, it was inconceivable that such a protest could be allowed to change the direction of British foreign policy.[507] Fuelling the anger and feeling of class war was the Labour decision to send a delegation to Russia while the unrest at home was ongoing. Wilson declared that it showed clearly that Labour was simply an extension of Bolshevism.[508] In his diary, he recorded that the establishment of Labour mission to Moscow meant they were now guilty of sedition at every level of British affairs.[509]

The stakes were high, with the government still unsure about the loyalty of the armed forces, as Field Marshall Wilson himself mused: "If it was the government's intention to fight the Council of Action, (that) unless the troops were specially prepared (for) what it was they were going to be called upon to fight... I could not guarantee what would happen."[510] Though some were ready to take the risk, it was seen as too great a gamble by Lloyd George, who was forced to release a statement declaring that there would be no direct intervention against Russia as a result of their war with the Poles.[511] In the Cabinet, the now-familiar divide continued to lead to clashes, seeing those who wanted to pursue a policy of negotiation pitted against those who sought to achieve the aims of British foreign policy regardless, dealing with domestic unrest through force if necessary. Churchill and Curzon argued strongly that Britain had to support its allies, but for Lloyd George and Austen Chamberlain, the risk was just as paramount an issue.[512] Such was the discord in Cabinet that Churchill, in frustration at the refusal of Lloyd George to change tact, made his views clear in a letter to him on the matter, stating that there was a very real risk of a "Bolshevised area" in Europe if nothing

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505 Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Papers, Curzon to LG, 29 June 1920, LG/F/12/3/49
506 H.J. Elcock, Britain and the Russo-Polish Frontier, 1919-1921, *The Historical journal*, 12. No. 1 (1969), 139
507 Cabinet Conclusions, 09 August 1920, CAB 23/22/8
508 B. Ash, *The Lost Dictator*, London, 1968, pp. 262-67
509 *Henry Wilson Diary*, 24 August 1920
510 Callwell, *Field Marshall Henry Wilson*, pp. 259-60
511 Kendall, *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain*, p. 194
512 Cabinet Conclusions, 17 August 1920, CAB 23/22/11

was done to help.[513]

Demonstrations were soon occurring across the country with the *Herald* declaring, “Not a Man, Not a Gun, Not a Soul!” should go to Poland.[514] By September, a provisional General Strike was mooted and a *Manifesto to the Troops* was sent out to try and ensure solidarity between strikers and soldiers, declaring: “The British Government cannot use British workers for their dirty work, but they may try to use you.”[515] Reports poured into the Cabinet describing a number of other new threats to law and order. In Birmingham, for example, George Ebury had told a packed crowd, “Tell the government that if they don't raise the blockade and free Russia the workers will take possession of England... The East has shown you the way and as sure as I am on this platform I can see the revolution coming.”[516]

To the Cabinet, the threat was clear: with the strength of support enjoyed by the left on the issue of Poland, the rise of a new single British Communist Party, and communist members in the decision-making body of the Hands Off Russia Campaign, the situation was now out of their control. To make matters worse, the population had begun to polarise, with many Conservative supporters becoming increasingly militant in the face of left-wing protests. As Ramsay MacDonald noted when discussing the London upper classes and the hardening of the class divide: “These people would shoot us with even more pleasure than the Germans. For after all the quarrel with the Germans was with powers of their own class... civil war spoke and [now] stared us in the face.[517]”

Speaking to *The Observer* on the 15th of August, Lloyd George stated that “the methods of Labour and its Councils of Action, are bombastic, hysterical and ridiculous. What they threaten is to make a revolution in order to force an open door.”[518] This was to become the line to take and by the end of the month it had become clear that the government would back down, despite anger from some members of the Cabinet. The reason why was soon clear: it had been warned by military advisors that popular feeling was in line with the

[513] Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Papers, Winston Churchill, War Office, to the Prime Minister, 26 Aug 1920, LG/F/9/2/41
[514] Daily Herald, August 8, 1920
[515] On Hands off Russia and Revolutionary Threat, 'Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad', 9 September 1920, Cab 24/111/49
[516] On Hands off Russia and Revolutionary Threat, 'Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad', 9 September 1920, Cab 24/111/49
[517] University of Manchester, Ramsay MacDonald Papers, Diary Entry, 10 April 1920, RMP PRO 30/69/1753
[518] *The Observer*, 15 August, 1920

Hands off Russia Campaign and they were aware that the nation was at the "bare (level) of serviceable troops to deal with trouble."[519] It was not the time for a fight – a fact that forced even Churchill and Curzon to temporarily back down. Despite the decision to pacify, the danger of unrest and even revolution remained very real, with the government on more than one occasion forced to post armed troops around the House of Commons.[520]

In the end, the government was saved from making a final decision by events. In late August, Polish troops defending Warsaw inflicted a huge defeat on the Russian forces, turning the tide of the war and ending the desperate situation that Poland had been in. Churchill now even called for British support to be offered in the Polish drive towards Russia – something quickly dismissed by Lloyd George.[521] Despite this, in Cabinet there was still the knowledge that they had backed down in the face of a mass labour movement. What the situation had done was show the fragility of the current government's approach to the militant left, with the Hardliners arguing that it was a clear example of why stronger, proactive and harsher measures were necessary. In this, they even had some support from men like Shortt, so often seen as a clear moderate and supporter of Lloyd George.[522] It was a bruising experience for all in the Cabinet and an argument left open by the way in which the crisis had ended so abruptly, but more tests were soon to come.

The miners' strike, September – October 1920

While the Polish situation occurred, another crisis was also brewing: in the North of England and the valleys of Wales, the coal miners of the nation were becoming increasingly militant. The first small strikes had occurred in early 1919 and by July of that year, the entirety of the Yorkshire miners and around 200,000 men in South Wales had walked out of work; even the pump men had joined in, leaving many mines flooded. In his response to the crisis, the Home Secretary Edward Shortt suggested sending in the Navy to pump the mines out and he prepared a draft bill, which would have allowed the government to arrest top trade union and Labour leaders. His move towards the Hardliners over this period is striking. Also showing that the level

[519] Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad', 12 August 1920, CAB 24/110/72
[520] Edward Short, Protection of the Houses of Parliament and Government Offices, 25 November 1920, CAB 24/115/67
[521] H.J. Elcock, *Britain and the Russo-Polish Frontier*, 1919-1921, p.144
[522] Cabinet Conclusion, q4 September 1920, CAB 23/22/12

of aggression that the government now felt could be legitimately used in such a situation, Lloyd George stated to the Cabinet in July that the small strike was "practical, not theoretical Bolshevism, and must be dealt with a firm hand." He went on to argue that this felt like the start of a showdown between the agitators and the forces of government:

> The whole future of the country might be at stake, if the government were beaten and the miners won it, would result in Soviet Government... Parliament might remain but the real Parliament would be the Headquarters of the Miners Federation in Russell Square.[523]

This was a belief repeated by G.H Roberts, the Food Controller, who said soon after that "there are large groups preparing for Soviet Government.[524]" Despite these warnings, this first foray into conflict between the miners and the government proved to be a short one, with the miners backing down that same month.

The mood worsened in early 1920 with Basil Thomson, now Director of Intelligence at the Home Office, stating the threat level and asking the Cabinet to bring forth further legislation against the Bolsheviks. Specifically, this amounted to a vague request for a law to make any revolutionary activities illegal, including receiving money from Russia or its agents, making inflammatory speeches, and any form of revolutionary propaganda.[525] In July, Edward Shortt had again showed his move towards the Hardliners, advocating passport bans for any agitators who travelled to Bolshevik Russia.[526] Six months later, with their complaints unresolved, the Miners' Conference on the 12th of August 1920 decided to once again vote for a wide-ranging strike – a vote decided with a majority of 168 to 3.[527] Their reasons were clear: support for nationalisation of the mines; the promises of the Sankey Commission (established to try and deal with the miners' complaints) coming to naught; and the fact that the cost of living for miners continued to rise while their wage packets had shrunk, partly due to the reduction in the price of coal.[528] The miners demanded wage increases, and, as was their right, called on the Triple Alliance for support.

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[523] Cabinet Conclusions, 27 July 1919, Cab 53/15/137
[524] Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, London 1969, p. 100
[525] Memo on Revolutionaries and the need for Legislation, 21 February 1920 , CAB 24/99/3
[526] Memo on Passport Removal by Edward Shortt - 24 July 1920 – CAB 24/109/93
[527] Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, p.88
[528] R. Arnot, *The Miners – Years of Struggle*, London, 1953, pp. 226-278; Allen Hunt, *Post War History of the British Working Class*, London, 1937, pp. 31 - 33

With unemployment across the nation high, the miners' call to arms was answered by pockets of workers across the country. Despite this, there was reason for the government to be optimistic: the other unions making up the Triple Alliance had not come out in full support. The government reacted quickly and aggressively, pushing through Parliament the new Emergency Powers Act that same month. The legislation would give powers to imprison agitators, and offered other powers to the forces of law and order.[529] The Cabinet also agreed that it might be necessary to bring extra troops to England to deal with the strikers, with one report stating that ten or twelve battalions from Ireland and troops from the Rhine may well be needed.[530] It was a situation which many believed could finally see a major clash between revolutionaries and the forces of law and order; indeed, as early as May, the Cabinet had been informed that the miners were being led and encouraged by Bolshevik agitators.[531] Galvanised by this knowledge, it seemed that the Hardliners were in the ascendency and on the issue of the miners were supported by Lloyd George and others who would normally exercise caution.

In the Cabinet, as always, Curzon and Churchill argued that the escalation in violence proved the need for strong action against agitators, and in August again called for the return of four divisions of the Rhine Army to deal with the matter with a show of strength.[532] But perhaps in a sign of a changing mood, support seemed to be growing for a policy of moderation, as advocated by Austen Chamberlain and Bonar Law in Cabinet. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Neville Chamberlain, at this point a backbencher, was one of these supporters, who had earlier declared his belief that not only should compromises be forged, but that the coal industry itself should hold the responsibility for the welfare of its workers.[533] Helped by this change of feeling among many backbenchers, the Cabinet was being swayed by the views of Chamberlain and Lloyd George and against those of Curzon and Churchill. Even General Wilson, so often on the Hardliners' side of the argument, wrote to Cabinet to recommend that troops not be used in the strike, though admittedly due to the pressures his forces were already facing in Ireland and Germany.[534]

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[529] Parliamentary Archives, Records of the Public Bills Office, Emergency Powers Act, c. 55 1920, HL/PO/PU/1/1920/10& 11c55
[530] Cabinet Conclusions, 17 August 1920, CAB 23/22/11
[531] Cabinet Memo, Communist Links to Miners' Strike, 20 May 1920, CAB 24/123/18
[532] Cabinet Conclusions, 17 August 1920, CAB 23/22/11
[533] House of Commons Debate, 30 June 1920, Vol 131, cols 585-586
[534] Cabinet Memo, Henry Wilson, the Internal Situation and Military Precautions. The Miners' Strike, 14 September 1920, CAB 24/111/54

However, as the year wore on, the situation continued to rest on a knife edge. This tension was largely because the Triple Alliance was still not ready to commit its support to the miners, calling for them to negotiate. However, it was soon realised that no deal could be made and later that month the miners returned to the pickets, this time with the full knowledge that the Triple Alliance had failed and that they were on their own.[535] The Cabinet were unwilling to meet their demands for a number of reasons, but the Hardliners continued to warn of the consequences of giving in to extremist forces.[536]

The Communist Party published an attack on the other union leaders, warning that, "The miners' defeat will be felt throughout the whole movement."[537] The strike still saw over 1,000,000 miners refuse to work, but without a unified stance with the other unions, it was doomed to failure, and by the 4th of November 1920 work had already begun, again albeit on a temporary basis, in return for small wage increases.[538] The deal finally agreed was a temporary one, lasting until March 1921 – a truce that both sides hoped would allow them to strengthen their hands. On the 11th of November, the Communist Party declared what it believed were the lessons of the strike – that the miners and railway workers wanted to fight but that their leaders had betrayed them and retreated in the face of conflict.[539] For the government, and especially those on the Conservative benches, it seemed as if negotiation and moderation had been the key reasons for the miners backing down, though as Churchill pointed out, it was far from a capitulation, and warnings continued on future strikes.[540] The main question, however, remained unanswered: what would the response be to a strike by the Triple Alliance? For some, such a scenario could be avoided by discussion with whichever union called for strikes, but for others that test would threaten the very control of the government and would need to be met with a strong response. This issue of the Triple Alliance and the threat of a General Strike would now start to dominate the issue for the Cabinet.

Black Friday, April 1921

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[535] Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, p. 89
[536] Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad, 14 October 1920, CAB 24/112/70
[537] Communist, 7 October, 1920
[538] Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, p. 90
[539] The Coal Settlement – A Patched up Peace, The Communist,11 November, 1920
[540] Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad, 7 July 1921 - CAB 24/126/15

For the government, the truce had offered some much-needed respite. In the Cabinet, there was a mood of relief, not least due to the realisation in October 1920 that, had a full-scale strike occurred, the forces of law and order would have been in no position to hold it in check. To many it seemed that social revolution and large-scale violent unrest had been frighteningly close, halted only by the failure of the unions to unify. But by March 1921, with the truce coming to an end, it seemed that the government would soon have to face the miners' union again in a battle that neither could afford to lose. Attempts to negotiate had failed and during the month legislation was put through to decontrol the mine industry; coal owners also posted notices that by the end of March all contracts of services would end.[541] With coal prices continuing to collapse and the government aid to mine owners coming to an end, conditions for miners in Britain continued to worsen. With the mine owners not passing on aid to the miners, and an announcement that lower wages would be needed, the miners' union again began to prepare for the next big strike. It was to begin on the 1st of April 1921.[542]

The government, too, was preparing, and early debates in Cabinet were dominated by the more hawkish members of government. Winston Churchill had pushed for the use of the military in 1920, and in January 1921, alongside Lord Curzon and others, he asked the Prime Minister to allow a strong response to deal with future threats from the miners. It was a demand that would gain some traction, with the Cabinet agreeing to limited powers in the event of a violent strike, including allowing Churchill to allocate troops and have powers over a force of special constables.[543] Quoting the 1920 Emergency Powers Act, another of Churchill's allies, the Secretary of State for War Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, told the Cabinet that the situation was so serious that he had made sure that eighteen infantry battalions and ten Guards battalions were ready in Britain, adding that it might be desirable to withdraw some of the 51 battalions then serving in Ireland.[544] A committee was also established to plan the possibility of creating a special defence force from loyal ex-servicemen and loyal citizens; all leave was cancelled and troop movements were made "in view of the possibility of a sudden railway strike."[545] To add to the atmosphere of paranoia and reaction, unrest and apparently Socialist/Bolshevik-inspired disorder had continued to occur across the country. One government

[541] Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, pp. 92-93
[542] Florey, *The General Strike of 1926*, p. 79
[543] Cabinet Conclusions on Strike Preparations, 16 January 1921, CAB 23/35/10
[544] Cabinet Conclusions, 4 April 1921, CAB 23/25, 3
[545] Cabinet Conclusions 4 April 1921, Cab 23/25, 3

report, describing a spate of violence in Dundee, drew the conclusion that the unemployed were now being turned against the government by Communist agitators:

> The revolutionary elements in Dundee seem to have adopted militant tactics. On February 16th a public meeting convened by a patriotic society was packed by extremists to the number of about five hundred. In about twenty minutes, the meeting had been broken up. Detonators or small bombs were fired, and at the conclusion pistols were fired on the staircase... the unemployed in this city seem to have come under the domination of the Communists.[546]

Other reports on the threat of revolution were now being passed to Cabinet members on a weekly basis. The government declared a State of Emergency and on the 4th of April troops were moved into the coalfields. The next day all military leave was cancelled by the War Office. Under the instruction of Churchill, London's parks were turned into military bases, in case the strike turned into a full-scale revolution. With the approval of Worthington-Evans, all Army and Navy Reservists were called up and a new defence force established.[547] The War Office would in total ensure that 56 infantry battalions and six cavalry regiments were called on for strike duty.[548] On the 8th of April, the Cabinet was updated of the ongoing strike in a memo – one that made clear to the Hardliners that the Prime Minister was still pursuing a policy of negotiation with the strikers.[549] But despite this emphasis on talks the successes of the Hardliners in the debates, especially Churchill, Curzon and Worthington-Evans, had seemed to suggest to them they were in the ascendency.

But the chance to break the miners by force was not to come, while negotiations with the leaders of the other unions was making headway, proved by the fact that the Triple Alliance still had not come out in full support of the miners. After meeting with the government on the 9th of April, the leadership of these unions even agreed to push the miners to allow pump men to be exempt from the strike.[550] On the 12th April, Lloyd George announced to the Cabinet: “The nation is, for the first time in its history, confronted by an attempt to

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[546] Attacks in Dundee, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad, 3 March 1921, CAB 24/120/67
[547] Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, p. 93
[548] Memo by War Office to Geddes Committee on Public Expenditure, 1921, CAB 27/164
[549] Cabinet Memo, The Miners, 8 April 1921, CAB 24/122/9
[550] Cabinet Memo, the Miners' Strike. Notes of Conferences held between the Government and Representatives of the Railwaymen and Transport Workers, 9 April 1921, CAB 24/122/18

coerce it into capitulation by the destruction of its resources, and this menace is apparently now to be supplemented by a concerted plan to suspend the transport services which are essential to the life of the country."[551] He called for full support behind his plan for peaceful settlement with the other branches of the Triple Alliance, dashing the Hardliners again in Cabinet by overruling Churchill's support for muzzling the left wing press.

> The Home Secretary informed the Cabinet that the *Daily Herald* [was] advocating revolution in very violent terms. Sir Basil Thomson proposed to intercept the copies, and to take steps with a view to prosecution if the contents warranted such action. Doubts were expressed to the desirability of this course. It was generally felt that the publication of one statement of revolutionary character would bring home to the nation the gravity of the crisis and might do more good than harm, although action would have to be taken to prevent its repetition.[552]

With the backbenchers demanding a government victory, and with Churchill, Curzon and others arguing that no ground should be given, the Prime Minister could not afford to budge in the negotiations. In the end, though, it would be internal divides, and in particular, the failure of the Triple Alliance to commit to the miners, not government aggression, that would spell the end for the strikers. On the 15th of April – a day that came to be known as 'Black Friday' – the Triple Alliance officially collapsed, with the other key unions refusing to continue in any form of mass industrial action to support the miners. The miners were now on their own.[553] The miners stayed out on their own until July 1921 and were forced to return to work totally defeated. In the months they were out, the government had moved large numbers of troops into coal areas and, in doing so, had created anger among many in the unions that would not be forgotten. As *The Communist* told its readers at the end of April, "the movement is directed by leaders who do not want to fight... These leaders must go."[554]

The miners would not back down again and the union leaders too realised how deep the resentment at their

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[551] Cabinet Conclusions, 12 April 1921, CAB 23/25/2
[552] The Daily Herald, Cabinet Conclusions on the ongoing Industrial Crisis, 12 April 1921, CAB 23/25/2
[553] Klugmann, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, p. 95
[554] The Communist, 23 April, 1921

lack of action was felt among the men. As another leading Communist would tell a packed audience in Coventry later that year, "Where are your Red Guards… preach Communism to your acquaintances from morning to night! The revolution must be a bloody one."[555] Churchill was so adamant that conflict would soon come again that he openly discussed with colleagues the idea to raise civilian militia forces to combat the Bolsheviks, corresponding with military figures such as Brigadier-General Henry Malcolm (who had done similar in Sri Lanka to combat rebels) to formulate a plan of action.[556] He was also delighted later that year with the appointment of Sir Wyndham Childs to replace Basil Thompson; though Thompson was himself an anti-Bolshevik, Childs was even stronger – stating that he saw the battle against Bolshevism as "the most important part of my work."[557] Both the Hardliners and the moderates could also point to success for their paths; Lloyd George had continued with negotiation but also allowed troops to be deployed; this was something he would tell his French Allies would now need to be the status quo. Though the fact that this was also an excellent excuse not to offer troops to help their occupation of the Rhineland after Germany's default on reparations is also highly relevant.[558]

The Conservative Party, the Russian Trade Agreement and the Genoa Conference

Alongside the splits already discussed, a new fissure had opened surrounding the potential signing of a trade agreement with Russia in 1920. With Britain struggling economically after years of conflict, Lloyd George felt strongly that new trade deals were needed, even if that meant resuming trade with the now-Bolshevik Russia. It was a plan that Lloyd George unveiled to a meeting of the Allied Supreme Council in Paris on the 14th of January 1920.[559] After making some overtures to Moscow the following week, he launched his new policy officially during the first week of February.[560] These plans were met with a great deal of hostility in the Cabinet, not least by the powerful and familiar combination of Churchill and Curzon. Having only recently come to terms with the decision by the Prime Minister to end support for the Whites in the Civil

555 Howard Webb Violent Speech Report, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad, 16 July 1921, CAB 24/126/39

556 The Churchill Archives, Brigadier-General Henry Malcolm to WSC, 23 November 1921, CHAR 2/117/102

557 Sir Wyndham Childs, *Episodes and Reflections*, London, 1930, p. 209

558 Worthington-Evans Papers, Bodleian Library, Notes on Conference at Lympne, 23 April 1921

559 E.L. Woodwood, Documents of British Foreign Policy, 1919 – 1939 Vol II, London, 1947, No. 71/73, pp. 867-75

560 M.V. Glenny, The Anglo Soviet Trade Agreement, March 1921, *Journal of Contemporary British History*, 5, No. 2 (1970), 63-82

War, there was no shortage of anger at this new and unprecedented symbol of Soviet recognition.[561]

Curzon was the most vocal of opponents to the deal, and as Foreign Secretary he believed that the actions undertaken by the Russians throughout the British Empire were reason enough to cancel talks. Throughout 1920, he had received continuing reports that the Bolsheviks had stepped up their activities in India, Persia and Afghanistan. In May, he put these concerns in writing to the Cabinet, stating: "we can hardly contemplate coming to its rescue without exacting our price for it, and it seems to me that price can far better be paid in a cessation of Bolshevik hostility in parts of the world important to us."[562] He was also well aware of the Russian enthusiasm for confrontation with Britain, reaching a peak at the Congress for the People of the East at Baku in September 1920. Here the delegates heard Zinoviev call for a Holy War against British Imperialism.[563] Such was the importance of this issue to Curzon that he had, on the day of the first meetings with Russian representatives, sent a memo to the Cabinet demanding a clause be inserted in any agreement that would promise an end to Bolshevik propaganda throughout the British Empire.[564] This anger by Curzon was such that Fisher noted that Lloyd George denounced the Foreign Secretary in Cabinet for his obstructiveness.[565] In Cabinet, he was joined by Churchill, Birkenhead and Long in his opposition. Lloyd George had Chamberlain on side, his other strong ally being Horne on the matter, while the Liberals in Cabinet also silently gravitated to him.[566]

Churchill had shown his disgust at the potential treaty in a note passed out to the entire Cabinet in August, outlining his objections to the plan.[567] Walter Long had even been using Admiralty Weekly Reports to voice his concern – something Maurice Hankey, Secretary to the Cabinet, was forced to write to warn him about.[568] In September, Churchill and Curzon weakened their hand over the issue of British prisoners in Russia, with Curzon willing to enter talks to get them out and Churchill opposed to any relations with the Bolsheviks. Under public pressure and using his position as foreign secretary, Curzon was to win, telling the Cabinet on

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561 Thompson, *Russia, Bolshevism, Versailles Peace*, p. 356
562 Cabinet paper, 'Negotiations with Mr Krassin – Note by Lord Curzon', 27 May 1920, CAB 24/106/51
563 Steiner, *The Lights that Failed*, p. 158
564 Note by Lord Curzon, Negotiations with Mr Krassin, Cabinet Minutes, 27 May 1920, CAB 24/106/51
565 F. Russell, Bryant (ed.), *Coalition Diaries and Letters of H.A.L Fisher* 1919-1920, 2006, Diary, 7 June 1920
566 Kenneth O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity*, p.138
567 Cabinet memo, Draft Trading Agreement with Russia, 24 August 1920, CAB 24/111/8
568 Note from Hankey to Long, Trading Relations with Russia, 24 September 1920, CAB 21/173

the 16th of September that if prisoner exchange was part of the deal, he would listen. Despite this internal clash, Hardliner opposition continued with Walter Long so angry that he even stated his personal opposition to the treaty in one of his Admiralty Weekly Reports, openly showing Cabinet disunity and earning himself a rap on the knuckles from Hankey soon after.[569]

The climax of Churchill and Long's opposition came in November after the British prisoners in Russia had safely returned home. Hoping now that Curzon and others would join them, Churchill raised all his disagreements with the treaty, pleading to the Cabinet in an open memo "ought we… to sustain this deadly conspiracy with the favour and countenance of the British government."[570] That same day, Lloyd George prepared for the debate, with civil servant E. F. Wise passing him a note on the expected battlegrounds to study.[571] Churchill also circulated a note to Cabinet voicing his anger over the treaty; on the meeting of the 17th, he argued with the Prime Minister so resolutely in Cabinet that the debate had to be adjourned, with the Prime Minister at one point retorting to a furious Churchill that it made economic sense to trade with Russia. "After all, we trade with cannibals in the Solomon Islands."[572] In the next argument, Churchill is claimed to have gone so far as to threaten to resign should the treaty go ahead. In response, his ally, Birkenhead, wrote him an urgent letter asking him to reconsider:

> I have been considering very carefully the most alarming note which you handed to me at the Cabinet this morning. I am most clearly of the opinion that if the decision goes against you tomorrow, you will be making a mistake of a magnitude that shocks me, if you carried out any such intention. You would cut yourself adrift perhaps permanently, certainly for a very long time, from the Coalition.
>
> I have only to add that I am persuaded that this is not one of those great occasions when a member of Government is faced with a decision so vital upon a principle, as to justify him becoming separated from his colleagues with whom he is otherwise in general agreement, and withdrawing his services

569 Cabinet Archives, Letter, Hankey to Long, 24 September 1920, CAB 21/173
570 Churchill Papers: 'Memorandum to Cabinet'. War office, 16 November 1920: C.16/23
571 Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Papers, E.F Wise - Note on Russian Trade Agreement, 16 November 1920, LG/F/202/3/27
572 Cabinet Minutes, 17 November 1920, CAB 23/23/4

from a country which very greatly needs him in the constructive work of reorganisation.[573]

Birkenhead went on to warn him of his political chances should he resign and ended with a statement that made clear his view on the issue. It must have had some effect, as despite continuing his argument in the meeting the next day, no such grand and dramatic gesture was even alluded to.[574] It was the closest Churchill had come to resigning over the issue of Bolshevism since the debates on Intervention and the split in the Cabinet seemed larger than ever. Such was his concern that Austen Chamberlain was worried of a collapse of the coalition itself, stating that "isolated recognition (of Russia) by us would in any case raise great difficulties among our followers in the House of Commons and, if it led to break with Churchill, it would be quite fatal for us."[575]

Though he had not jumped ship, Churchill was still determined to confront and change the Prime Minister's mind on the matter. On the 24th, he, Curzon and Montagu all signed a joint note to Cabinet again voicing their anger; Curzon would send another the following month.[576] Churchill also wrote to Lord Derby asking for his support in the venture in December – something Lord Derby willingly agreed too.[577] With Russia still in the throes of conflict and with reports of a brutal famine sweeping the Bolshevik-held territories, it was to him an opportunity to allow Bolshevism to destroy itself, at the very least by adopting a policy of refusing aid or such a treaty. As Churchill wrote to Curzon in December, the Trade Agreement was giving the Bolsheviks both recognition and the chance to survive the dreadful domestic situation they had inherited and the famine they had created: "We want to nourish the dog, not the tapeworm that is killing the dog".[578] Wilson too was angry, recording in his diary on New Year's Eve that the actions of Lloyd George over Russia had led him to believe that he was "totally unfit to govern."[579]

To make matters worse for the Prime Minister, Russia signed treaties with Afghanistan, Persia and Turkey in

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573 Churchill College, Churchill Papers: Birkenhead to Churchill, 17 November 1920. C. 22/3

574 Cabinet Minutes, 18 November 1920, CAB 23/23/5

575 Gilbert, *Churchill IV*, p. 775; AJP Taylor (ed), *My Darling Pussy: Letters of Lloyd George and Frances Stevenson*, 1913-41, London, 1975, p. 40

576 Cabinet Memo, Churchill, Curzon, Montagu, Russian Trade Agreement, 24 Nov 1920, CAB 24/115/28; Cabinet Memo, Curzon, The Russian trade Agreement, 13 Dec 1920, CAB 24/116/86

577 The Churchill Archive, Churchill to Lord Derby, December 1920, CHAR 2/111/113-114

578 Churchill to Curzon, 21 December 1920, quoted in Gilbert, 'Winston Churchill, vol 4', pp. 760-1

579 Travis Corsby, *The Unknown Lloyd George, A Statesman in Conflict*, London, 2014, p. 276

February and March 1921, creating a ring of hostile states around Britain's key interests in the Middle East and, of course, Northern India. The Hardliners were furious. But despite the opposition in his coalition Cabinet, Lloyd George continued and signed the Trade Agreement on the 16th of March 1921. His one concession, other than the Curzon clause, was that it was made clear to those in Westminster and in Europe that the treaty in no way recognised the legitimacy of the Bolshevik government in Russia.[580] Such recognition would not occur until February 1924, by a Labour Government.

Yet, in spite of the signing of the Treaty in March 1921, the fallout was not yet over. The Cabinet meeting that day neglected to include Churchill, Curzon, Montagu or any key Hardliners, seemingly a tactic to fast track the Prime Ministers preferred policy without debate.[581] When they did meet on the 22nd of March, Churchill was not present, but Curzon and Montagu made their feelings known. It seemed that although the treaty had been signed, the opposition to it was not over.[582]

Genoa

On 6th January 1922, the Supreme War Council met at Cannes. Lloyd George dominated the opening session and in it put forward his plan of holding a further peace conference with Russia also invited to ensure the "reconstruction of economic Europe". He was convinced that Russia must be brought into the fold to ensure that Europe could prosper. To him it was, as it had been since the end of the intervention debate in 1919, "the crux upon which hinged a peaceful and stable Europe."[583] As Riddell also notes, the Prime Minister was convinced that economic relations with Russia at the least were essential for Britain to rebuild.[584] Though this was contingent on a number of factors – recognising debts, respect of private property, promises to halt propaganda in the Empire – to many in Britain and in the Conservative Party it seemed close to offering full recognition to Bolshevik Russia. The conference was held in Genoa in April of that year.

By March, the issue had expanded to the wider one of Soviet recognition. Austen Chamberlain wrote to

580 The Foreign Office Archive, Woodwood, Documents of British Foreign Policy, Doc no. 74/72, pp. 894-96
581 Cabinet Conclusions, 16 March 1921, CAB 23/38/30
582 Cabinet Conclusions, 22 March 1921, CAB 23/24/16
583 House of Commons, 25 May 1919, v. 154, c. 1457
584 Lord Riddell, *Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary* of the Peace and After, p. 249

Lloyd George on the 21st of March to state that Churchill (now Colonial Secretary) had again threatened to leave the government over the issue. This was something which could also split the Conservative Party. He went on in a further letter two days later to state that, along with Churchill, Curzon, and Law were also restless.[585] Cecil angrily implied that the Prime Minister was acting out of a sense of ego and to ensure his own popularity among the working class, saying that he was "exploiting the international difficulties in Europe... [to obtain a] personal vote of confidence."[586] However, strangely Birkenhead had seemingly swapped sides, agreeing to help and accompany the Prime Minister during his mission to Genoa. His role at the conference led to Diehard mutterings that he had been 'chloroformed' by Lloyd George and that he had gone soft.[587] He even delivered a speech to the assembled media defending the conference and its aims, stating that though he held an intense dislike of the Bolsheviks, the right of Russians to choose their own institutions cannot be disputed.[588]

On the backbenches, however, there was deep resentment at the policy, with many in the lower ranks of the Conservative Party seeing this as yet another example of the growing incapability of the Coalition.[589] When combined with the Hardliners in Cabinet, it was a dangerous group. Churchill continued to fan the flames, writing late in March that Genoa was "not a national British policy but only a party Lloyd Georgian affair."[590] In the Commons, tensions continued to rise, not helped by Austen Chamberlain hampering Churchill's attempts to gain a long debate and galvanise backbench anger and support for the Hardliners.[591] He would again and again insist that "the state of public business" did not allow him to "allot more than one day for discussion."[592] Though he did at least demand in private that Lloyd George consult Cabinet before any additional diplomatic recognition was given to Russia and "that in the meantime ministers were in no way committed."[593]

The anger was so deep and the situation so serious that Lloyd George told his secretary that if the

585 Chamberlain Papers, Chamberlain to Lloyd George, 21 and 23 March 1922, AC 23/6/18 and 20
586 House of Commons, 27 March 1922, v. 152, c. 1007
587 Campbell, *Lord Birkenhead*, p. 592
588 Campbell, *Lord Birkenhead*, p. 594
589 Stuart Ball, *'Baldwin and the Conservative Party: The Crisis of 1929-1931'*, Yale, 1988, p. 3
590 Churchill to Clementine Churchill, 7 February 1922, Gilbert, Churchill, IV, III, p. 1757
591 Rose, Conservative Foreign Policy, p. 211
592 House of Commons, 30 March 1922, Vol 151, cols. 1524
593 Lloyd George Papers, A Chamberlain to L George, 23 March 1922, F/7/5/22

Conservatives sided with Churchill, he would be forced to resign, stating that in that instance, "I go without any hesitation."[594] But despite this moment of apparent uncertainty, Lloyd George quickly retook the initiative, telling Austen Chamberlain that the Cabinet must therefore choose between them.[595] Chamberlain responded, voicing his own support but saying in clear terms that, with backbench support behind him, Churchill would be too dangerous for the Conservatives in Cabinet to side against on this issue.[596] Indeed Chamberlain was deeply concerned, telling Lloyd George in a series of letters of his fears, "I cannot affront the opinion of practically the whole of my party in a matter of this kind in which I think their attitude is reasonable" and that he was now "carefully refrained from saying anything that might anger or embitter" his colleagues.[597] Chamberlain went so far as to ask the Prime Minister to imagine the situation, "if (Liberal) Churchill retired because he was more Tory then the Tory ministers."[598] He also confided in Curzon his deep fears that it was an issue that would cause "a new and very real split in the Party."[599] Birkenhead too was worried, writing "Isolated recognition by us would in any case raise great difficulties among our followers in the House of Commons and, if were to lead to a breach with Churchill, it would be quite fatal to us."[600] Though still loyal to Lloyd George, both he and Chamberlain agreed that only after a long trial period of good faith could such an offer even be considered, with both also ensuring that the Prime Minister would agree to a probationary period – quite likely the only way the vote passed.[601]

Churchill felt betrayed by his friend Birkenhead, writing to him in a note he only refrained from sending at the last minute: "I had your promise that you would endeavour to see the views which we have represented together... given full effect at the Conference... but as far as I can see you have yielded facilely to the influences by which you have been surrounded."[602] Phillip Sassoon even wrote to Lloyd George to tell him of the rift: "Winston is terribly annoyed with F.E.'s attitude and considers that he has been nobbled by

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[594] Letter of 22nd March 1922, quoted in Taylor, My Darling Pussy, p.40

[595] Lloyd George Papers, LG to A Chamberlain, 22 March. 1922, F/7/5/21

[596] Lloyd George Papers, A Chamberlain to LG, 23 March. 1922, F/7/5/22

[597] Lloyd George Papers, A Chamberlain to L George, 23 March 1922, F/7/5/22 and Lloyd George Papers, A Chamberlain to L George, 24 March 1922, F/7/5/24

[598] Austen Chamberlain Papers, A Chamberlain to L George, 21 March 1922, AC/23/6/18

[599] Austen Chamberlain Papers, A Chamberlain to Curzon, 24 March 1922, AC/23/6/26

[600] House of Commons Debate, 3 April 1922, Vol. 152, cols. 1988

[601] House of Commons Debate, 3 April 1922, Vol. 152, cols. 1988: A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), Darling Pussy, p. 40

[602] Gilbert, *Winston Churchill*, 1917-1922, pp. 782-3

you!"[603] A few days later, the Prime Minister even sent for Birkenhead to travel to meet him there, confiding to Frances that it was "to counteract Winston's mischief."[604] To Churchill, this was another betrayal from a man and friend he considered to be on his side in the ongoing debates around intervention, complaining to Sassoon that F.E. "could not resist going back for one final hug with the Bolshies!"[605] However, despite the protestations and dramatics in his Cabinet, Lloyd George was convinced. He told the Commons that such an agreement "would restore the machinery of international trade." He also stated that it could diffuse the risk of the current Bolsheviks to Empire and Britain by forcing them to agree to certain clauses.[606]

Churchill was not alone in his anger. Curzon had already written to Chamberlain saying that the Trade Agreement had proven to be a "farce" and that Soviet propaganda had not been affected by it.[607] Even Chamberlain was now clear in his view that Russia must show signs of good faith before any diplomatic recognition could be offered and was also deeply worried that Lloyd George may be doing irreparable damage to the country's European alliances. He told Lloyd George that the Party would not accept further problems with France, "for the sake of Russia."[608] Writing to Curzon, he was more direct in his words, saying that the Treaty was risking "sacrificing French friendship for the beaux yeux of the Bolsheviks."[609] Curzon too was furious, while Joynson-Hicks asked if "the Prime Minister [was] in full possession of these facts before he went to Genoa?"[610] Cecil agreed and added that it was undeniable that relations had "deteriorated as a result of Genoa."[611] It was to come to a head on the eve of the conference when Churchill openly warned the Prime Minister that recognition of the Soviet Government was "quite impossible" to agree on, warning later that on this issue that "I was a branch that creaked before it broke".[612] In the face of such pressure, it was a difficult decision for the Prime Minister, but one that, in the end, he was saved from making, after Berlin and Moscow announced their own deal – the Rapallo Agreement. Any offer of recognition between Russian and Britain was now off the table. Despite this, Curzon would continue to

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603 Lloyd George Papers, Sassoon to LG, 28 April 1922, F/45/1/13
604 Lloyd George to Frances Stevenson, 3 May 1922, My Darling Pussy, p. 48
605 Lloyd George Papers, Sassoon to LG, 5 May 1922, F/45/1/14
606 House of Commons Debate, 3 April 1922, Vol. 152, cols. 1892-3: House of Commons, 3 April 1922 1922, v. 152, c. 1903
607 Chamberlain Papers, Curzon to Chamberlain, 13 May 1922, AC/23/6/34
608 Austen Chamberlain Papers, A Chamberlain to L George, 10 May 1922, AC/23/6/40
609 The Curzon Papers, A Chamberlain to Curzon, 15 May 1922, Curzon MSS EUR. F, 112/223
610 House of Commons Debate, 8 May 1922, Vol. 153, cols. 1804
611 House of Commons Debate, 25 May 1922, Vol. 154, cols. 1495
612 Lloyd George Papers, WSC to LG, 26 July 1922, F/10/3/22

attack Russia on every occasion, stating in April 1923 that the Russians represented the biggest threat to both Britain and her Empire and warning colleagues to remain vigilant.[613]

Despite the continued anger of Curzon, it was clear that the anticlimactic end to the argument over trade took both sides away from the precipice; however, it is perhaps surprising that there was again no long-lasting split between Churchill and Lloyd George over this emotive matter, especially when combined with the on-going debate between the two on the threat of Bolshevism in general. One conclusion is that, for all of their differences, the two sides of the Cabinet, personified by these two men, needed each other, and deep down were aware of this. Lloyd George could have restrained Churchill, even sacked him, just as Churchill could have resigned and perhaps brought down the Coalition, but both were aware of the political fallout that this would bring.

Lloyd George needed the Conservatives for a number of reasons. As well as to maintain his government and stave off the emboldened Labour Party, he was also aware that the pretence of pacifying the Tories allowed him more of a free hand on Russia than the Hands Off Russia group would otherwise allow. Churchill knew that resignation may mean an end to his Prime Ministerial ambitions, especially should he take the blame for a subsequent coalition collapse and potential Labour victory. Though it was a relationship based as much on mutual need as respect, Lloyd George did have Churchill's loyalty. The question, however, remained over what would happen should a major shift take place in British politics – something that was soon to occur with the rise of Stanley Baldwin to political prominence.

The coalition, however, did not break, perhaps because of the middle-way approach forced on Lloyd George by the Hardliners and even moderates of the Tories, who had won the battle for key stipulations. Or perhaps for the simple reason that both parties feared what would happen if they lost. They were, as Churchill put it, "all tied up together."[614]

Conclusion

613 Christopher Andrew, The British Secret Service and Anglo-Soviet Relations in the 1920s: From the Trade Negotiations to the Zinoviev Letter, *The Historical Journal*, 20, No. 2, (1977), 685

614 Churchill to Clementine Churchill, 7 February 1922, Gilbert, Churchill, IV, III, p. 1757

Though the biggest threats of the period, such as widespread unrest over intervention in Poland and later over the conditions faced by the miners, had been dealt with without violence, the rifts that they represented had not been smoothed over for good. For the Prime Minister, these events, however, did show continued success for his middle-way approach to the unrest in the nation. With the miners, Lloyd George followed his natural instincts to open talks, strongly believing that the strikes were in protest against poor working conditions and wages and not in any way a real political movement designed to overthrow the democratic government. It was due to this belief that the moderates in Cabinet quickly won the argument to open discussions with the trade unions – an opportunity used by the Prime Minister to make a direct appeal for peace, which turned out to be vital to the failure of the Triple Alliance to commit to joint strikes and to the eventual backing down of the strikers on Black Friday. Yet it is clear that these discussions were only able to achieve such impressive results due to the Prime Minister's other decision to allow the Hardliners a say after they won some key debates in the Cabinet. It was this middle-way approach that saw the issuing of the Emergency Powers Act after demands by Churchill, Curzon in Cabinet and strong support from Wilson – something which would help the government a great deal in the years to come. The Hardliners had also succeeded in bringing troops back from Germany, increasing government confidence at an uncertain time.

It is also this period, however, which shows that there were two real exceptions to Lloyd George's middle-way approach on the issue of domestic Bolshevism and unrest: the reaction to the Hands Off Russia movement and to the signing of the Russian Trade Agreement in 1921. The policy approach to the Hands Off Russia movement saw the moderates prevailing over the Hardliners in perhaps every aspect, even to the extent that it looked likely that Britain would change its policy over the Russo-Polish War despite the objection of Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon. The reason for this lack of middle-way approach by the Prime Minister is perhaps easy to explain. The movement he faced was not a small extremist group; rather it was supported by the majority of the working class across the entire nation – it is also surely significant that it occurred simultaneously as the loss of control in both the military and police, severely reducing the options available to the Cabinet. The second of these exceptions, the Russian Trade Agreement in 1921, is perhaps harder to explain away. Here the Prime Minister not only ignored the Hardliners but also a number of more moderate Cabinet ministers, and nearly the entire Conservative backbenches and membership, to sign the

initial deal. Until undone by Rapallo, it was a situation that looked like it would lead to a full-blown Cabinet mutiny, with Lloyd George determined that the economic situation needed this new avenue of trade and willing to face down his Conservative colleagues to secure it.

As a result, analysing the factions over these issues becomes more complicated. It is clear that the Hardliners remained a powerful force in Cabinet with enough political weight to influence policy, at some points fully dictating it and at the majority of other points pushing the moderates into a middle-way approach that proves the Hardliners' impact. The issues of Russian recognition and the Trade Agreement are the main exceptions and shows Lloyd George and the moderates refusing to budge on their policy. However, there is a big unknown – what would have happened had Rapello not cut short the debate? The signing of an agreement between Russian and Germany effectively ended the debate in Cabinet prematurely, therefore it is impossible to say if the Hardliner pressure would have in the end paid off, or if Lloyd George was willing to risk a Cabinet split over the matter or would have made a deal. What is clear is that the Hardliners and moderates were now clearly clashing over the domestic threat of Bolshevism, and that the factions remained identifiable with key figures and set apart from the rest of the Cabinet, which was largely silent. While this silent group would vote with Lloyd George, their lack of involvement in these debates does not allow us to tell whether their support for his line stemmed from their agreement with the moderates or simply a lack of interest and/or more mundane factors such as party loyalty, careerism and Cabinet collective responsibility.

Chapter 6: "Behind Socialism stands Communism, behind Communism, Moscow!" Stanley Baldwin: Rise to Power and Electoral Defeat, 1922 – 1925

"It makes my blood boil to read of the way Monsieur Zinoviev is speaking of the Prime Minister of Great Britain today. At one time, there went up a cry of 'Hands off Russia' – my word! I think it is time someone said to Russia "Hands off England!"[615] *– Stanley Baldwin*

By 1922, Great Britain was readying itself for the upcoming General Election – one in which the potential rise of the extreme left and of the moderate Labour Party were issues of deep concern among Conservatives. By this point, others had started to join the Hardliners. The ever-increasing number of strikes saw Birkenhead clearly move over to the Hardliners on the issue of domestic bolshevism, telling the Lords that year that the Government should now act firmly to stamp out Bolshevism.

The debates were intensified by the fact that the party itself was also in a state of flux, with Bonar Law resigning from leadership in spring 1921 due to continuing ill health and Austen Chamberlain becoming Conservative Party Leader in the Coalition. His position on maintaining the coalition was difficult for many of his colleagues to comprehend, with many fearing that it was based on his personal link to Lloyd George. This can be seen in Amery's complaint that on discussions of the future for the party, he (Chamberlain) was "as usual altogether on the question of personal obligation and loyalty."[616] His role was a precarious one, balancing backbench anger at the continuing Coalition and his own respect for Lloyd George – a role he would later describe as "between the devil and the deep blue sea."[617] This was to change again, however, when at the Carlton Club meeting of 19th October 1922, backbenchers, led by Baldwin, voted to end the coalition government and fight the next election as a separate party. Austen Chamberlain stepped down the same day and Bonar Law stepped back into the role he had so recently left.

The Labour Party, on the other hand, was growing in strength and under the leadership of John Robert Clynes had seen a huge growth in support since the end of the war. In the build up to 1922, the party had

615 The Times, 21 October 1924

616 *Amery, Diaries*, p. 208 and L, Amery, Life II, p. 237

617 Ball, Portrait of a Party, p. 468, original source, Wilson to Younger, copied to Sanders, 5 Oct 1922, Bayford Diary

been making a concerted effort to distance itself from extremists, with a clear message that voting Labour was not a vote for class division or conflict. Despite this, many in the Cabinet saw the two as entwined. As the election campaign began in earnest, the issue of Bolshevism became a key issue for the government and debate in the Cabinet continued. Many still believed that the unrest seen across the continent would soon reach Britain and reports warned of increased Bolshevik activity across the country, including in the military.[618] It is here important to add that despite the understanding in hindsight that MacDonald's Labour Government was far from Bolshevik at the time, many Conservatives were honestly worried about the links between Labour and Bolshevism. Men such as Churchill believed that even if the moderates in the Labour Party were honest men, should Labour ever be given a position of power they would be overwhelmed by the multitude of extremists that existed under them. It is in this context that this period covered by this chapter must be viewed. Birkenhead also seemed to believe that Socialism and Bolshevism were two sides of the same coin, that one led to the other, and that the seemingly moderate Labour leaders were merely a front for Moscow.[619]

The election of 1922, retirement of Law and leadership election

On the 23rd of October 1922, when Conservative Bonar Law replaced Lloyd George as Prime Minister, an election was soon called. During the subsequent campaign, Churchill was increasingly becoming concerned with the apparent strength of Labour. This was not a new fear of his, even writing to Lloyd George as early as February to ask that the Liberals support the Conservative Party any upcoming election by not standing candidates against them in close seats, stating that, "if the present Coalition Government cannot maintain its unity, the political stability vital to Britain's recovery should be maintained by having a purely Conservative government supported by Coalition Liberals."[620] The Conservatives, however, were wary of such deals, not least due to the view on the backbenches (and by some in Cabinet) that a Conservative Party independent of the Liberals was the only real way to block the advances of socialism.[621] Other reports commissioned by the Cabinet were near hysterical, with one even claiming that Bolsheviks had now infiltrated schools and another

618 Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad, 9 March 1922, CAB 24/134/27
619 Campbell, *Birkenhead*, p. 534
620 Winston Churchill Archives, WSC to LG, 27 Feb 1922, CHAR 2/121/63-64
621 Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 3

stating that the trade unions were now saturated with Bolshevik feeling.[622] Interestingly, Churchill was sent the report separately as well.[623]

Churchill, fighting Dundee as a National Liberal Candidate, had the threat of Bolshevism close to home in his potential seat, opposed by William Gallacher (a key member of the Clyde uprising). The city had suffered severely in the post-war depression and Churchill urged that action be taken to address the poverty there, believing that it was so severe that it could lead to an outbreak of Bolshevism.[624] Suffering from illness, he campaigned as best he could but faced hostile reactions from an emboldened and Communist-influenced working class, including one occasion where a group of young men surrounded him singing the Red Flag.[625] In a shock defeat, Churchill came fourth behind the Scottish Prohibition Party, Labour and even a fellow National Liberal; he would not re-join Parliament until 1924.

Across the country, many on the right were increasingly aware of the new political mood sweeping the country, often equating socialism with the darker evil of Bolshevism. As a colleague from the Colonial Office wrote to Churchill in the aftermath of his defeat in Dundee, it was now clear that, "sooner or later we shall have a big fight with Socialism in this country."[626] Even Austen Chamberlain showed real concern about the threat of class conflict, as he recorded later that year:

> This is not a quarrel between capital and labour, or a question of wages or conditions of employment, it is a revolutionary attempt to subvert government and establish class rule.... It is a challenge to the government and a challenge to the Nation and I believe that both will take it up and fight it through.[627]

In a speech in Birmingham on 13 October, he stated that Labour was a key reason why some form of coalition must be maintained "in the face of the common foe".[628] With Bonar Law's victory on 15 November

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622 Socialist and Revolutionary Schools, Edward Shortt, 25 April 1922 - CAB 24/136/49 and Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom and Morale Abroad, December 1922 - CAB 24/140/75

623 The Churchill Archives, Edward Short to WSC, 25 April 1922, CHAR 2/122/146-148

624 Pelling, *Winston Churchill*, p. 280 and Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 4

625 Dundee Advertiser, 14 November 1922 and Manchester Guardian, 14 November 1922

626 Winston Churchill Archive, William Ormsby-Gore [later 4th Lord Harlech] (Colonial Office) to WSC, 21 Nov 1922, CHAR 2/125/64

627 The Chamberlain Papers, A Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 26 Sept 1922, Chamberlain MSS, AC 5/1/139 and also A Chamberlain to Ivy Chamberlain, 28th Sept 1922, Chamberlain MSS, AC 6/1/355 and also T. Jones, Whitehall Diary, p. 102

628 M. Kinnear, *Fall of Lloyd George*, pp. 120-1

1922, the anxiety was replaced by calm, although this was to be short-lived. Importantly, Law's victory cemented the end of the wartime National Government; however, his time in office was brief: suffering from throat cancer, he would be forced to resign in less than a year. It was an event that would open a new schism within the Party – one that once again would be influenced by the threat of Bolshevism.

Leadership contest and the rise of Baldwin

This section has been included in this research due to the impact of class unrest on the contest and the relevance of the very differing views of Curzon and Baldwin on the threat of Bolshevism. Lord Curzon was the bigger figure in the party, having been previously Viceroy of India and most recently Foreign Secretary, as well as a strong anti-Bolshevik and Hardliner on any threat he perceived as such. Stanley Baldwin, who had been Financial Secretary to the Treasury in 1919 and had since 1921 been President of the Board of Trade, was a man deeply concerned by the political world now dominated by growing social unrest. He was a moderate and could be placed firmly on the side of the pragmatists such as Austen Chamberlain and (notwithstanding his deep antipathy toward the former prime minister) Lloyd George.[629]

In the end, Baldwin would win; the reasons why are numerous but the splits within the Cabinet over the threat of Bolshevism played a part. A major factor in the contest was Law's refusal to nominate either man, which given Curzon's status and position in the party was a snub seemingly directed at the senior man. Why had he done this? It may have been because Curzon would have had to run the country from the Lords, but there was another factor – his and many moderates concerns about what Curzon's visceral hatred of the left might do to the fragile social peace in Britain.[630] So deep were those concerns that Law's Private Secretary, Sir Ronald Waterhouse, sent a private and unsigned memo to the King which queried how Curzon would deal with a miners' or transport workers' strike. [631] Balfour, too, would tell the King that Curzon was not the right man for the job, worried about how a Lord as Prime Minister would look and conscious of the way in which Labour and the far left would view such a move. As Ball notes, had Curzon been appointed, given the lack of Labour representation in the Lords, this would have been seen by many on the left as a provocative

629 Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 8
630 Gilmore, *Curzon*, p. 580
631 Cited from Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister*; pp. 520-1; J.CC Davidson, *Memoirs and Paper,* London, 1969 p. 152

class-war gesture.[632] Law's refusal to endorse Curzon may even have been affected by the words of his parliamentary rival, Labour's Arthur Henderson, who wrote to Law and Baldwin over a month before Law's resignation, warning that "the demonisation of Socialism as Communism potentially could cause deep rifts in society" – something surely Curzon personified.[633]

Baldwin was seen by friend and foe alike as just the opposite, regarded by many in the Party as a One Nation Conservative and a man known to want to avoid further fracturing of British society. He was the safe option: domestically, given the continuing threat on the far left and his more pragmatic and measured approach to industrial disputes; and politically, given that the divides within the Party that would need to be ironed out or at least papered over.[634] Baldwin was invited to a discussion with the King on the 22nd of May 1923 to become Prime Minister and form a government; with this offer set, he was appointed party leader on the 28th of that month. However, the clashes over coalition meant that despite this outlook, he was still not on good terms with Austen Chamberlain, the other key moderate in government. Leo Amery records that Baldwin was keen to rectify this and end coalition-based arguments with the offer of positions for Chamberlain and perhaps his allies in Government.[635] Though he also notes that the relationship between Baldwin and Chamberlain remained strained with Amery stating that Baldwin described Austen as "the stupidest fellow he knew."[636]

Unlike the Hardliners who remained relatively unified over what they saw as a great external threat, the moderates in 1923 had begun to factionalise. With Austen Chamberlain still at odds with Baldwin, as well as being embroiled in a rift with Amery, the main Conservative moderate from the Lloyd George era was not part of the key group. It was therefore a difficult faction for Neville Chamberlain to be fully part of, though as a moderate, as he was well aware of the clash between Austen and Amery.[637] However, Neville was keen to reunite the two men due to his own friendship with Amery. Indeed, in the build up to Baldwin winning the leadership contest, Chamberlain had dined with Amery and stated his support for Baldwin, with both then

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632 Ball, *Portrait of a Party*, p. 455

633 The Baldwin Papers, Henderson letter to Law and Baldwin, 17 April 1923, Volume 114 – F.2 Foreign Affairs

634 As seen in correspondence printed in, Phillip Williamson and Edward Baldwin, 'The Baldwin Papers: A Conservative Statesman, 1908 – 1947, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 82-85

635 *Amery Diaries*, 19 June 1923, vol. 1, p.330

636 *Amery Diaries*, 19 June 1923, vol. 1, p.328

637 *Amery Diaries*, 19 June 1923

speculating on which post they may get - with Amery hoping for Chancellor.[638] In the end, Neville rose to Chancellor in 1923, cementing him more to the moderates group. Joynson-Hicks was promoted to the health ministry, giving the Hardliners another strong ally too.[639]

Would these splits come back to haunt the new Prime Minister in future clashes with the Hardliners? The issue was certainly still under the surface as a letter to Baldwin from Sir Anderson Montagu-Barlow, the Minister for Labour, offering to resign after feeling pressured by the Hardliners for "more provocative attitude with… Labour" shows.[640] This would be tested in late 1923 with a major political miscalculation by the new leader.

1923 election

Soon after becoming prime minister, Stanley Baldwin made a major decision: a general election would be called to shore up his power and begin his time in office with democratic accountability. There are many views on what led to his decision and articles have been written on that subject alone. What seems clear, however, is that it was a combination of accountability, his plans for tariff reform, the increasingly bad unemployment situation and his wish to reunify the party after the post-coalition disagreements that fuelled his desire to go to the public.[641] It would be held on the 6th of December and saw a hung parliament, with Labour holding the most seats and forming a minority government.

The inconclusive result in the election once again saw the threat of Bolshevism (linked by many with Socialism) come to the fore. It was a disaster for the Conservatives, with a left-wing surge leading to a strong Labour result and despite having the most seats the Tories could convince the Liberals to prop them up.[642] A shocked and angry Churchill desperately urged Asquith to form a government of his own with Conservative

638 University of Birmingham, N Chamberlain papers, N.C Diary, 22 May, 1923, NC 2/22

639 David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain* P. 335

640 Bodleian Library, Baldwin Papers, Montague-Barlow to Baldwin, 24 August 1923, Baldwin MSS 6/5

641 For example see, Robert Self - Conservative Reunion and the general Election of 1923: A Reassessment, *Twentieth Century British History,* e 3, No. 3 (1992), 250

642 Frederik Walter Scott Craig, *British Electoral Facts, 1885–1975* (3 ed.), London, 1976

backing, creating an anti-Socialist party to block Labour.[643] This was not to happen. The Liberals instead supported a minority Labour Government to take office. Churchill went on to release a press statement which stated that, "the enthronement in office of a Socialist Government will be a serious national misfortune such as has usually befallen great states only on the morrow of defeat in war."[644] As a Liberal, the Earl of Inchape stated:

> Not a member of the Conservative or Liberal Party has a good word to say for Baldwin. He is written up as an absolutely mediocre man who should never have reached the position he has done... Moreover with a Labour Government in prospect, such folly is less forgivable when (Baldwin) could have carried on for another four years.[645]

One clear view held among the political elite after the election was that Baldwin was unfit for office; it seemed in allowing Socialism into government that he had united the factions in the Cabinet against him. "Suicide during a fit of temporary insanity" was Labour's Phillip Snowden's assessment, while Austen Chamberlain was recorded overhearing Balfour telling a friend that "Obviously... Baldwin is an idiot."[646] Curzon, too, was quick to condemn the failure of his leadership rival, especially given his typically dramatic warning when the election had been called: "If we fail, Baldwin will have been guilty of one of the greatest crimes in history, and if it be so he will have sinned from a mixture of innocence, ignorance, honesty and stupidity – fatal gifts in a statesman."[647] For Austen Chamberlain and Birkenhead, it was the action of a government largely made up of "second-class brains".[648]

However, the bigger issue for the Hardliners (and many others within the Party) was the new threat of Bolshevism, and in their view the fact that it would likely direct the newly elected Labour Party and its weak moderate leadership. Birkenhead had already made his views clear prior to the election, echoing the anti-socialist rhetoric of many Conservatives: "When once you have a Socialist government in power, it will not

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643 Churchill to Lady Bonham Carter, 8 Jan 1924, Cited in, M Cowling, The Impact of Labour, 1920-1924, London, 1971, p. 395

644 The Times, 18 January, 1924

645 The India Office Records, Inchape to Reading, 25 December 1923, Reading MSS Eur. F 118/97

646 Cited in A. Andreas, 'Phillip Snowden', London, 1930, p. 8 and Austen Chamberlain Archives, A. Chamberlain to Lord Lee, 14 December 1923, AMSS AC 35/3/18

647 Curzon to his wife, 14 November 1923 as cited in, Marchioness of Curzon, Reminiscences, London, 1955, p. 190

648 Cited in Robert Self, Conservative Reunion and the General Election of 1923, *Twentieth Century British History Journal*, 3. No 3 (1992), 249-73

be the moderate men who will direct the programme which that government is to carry out." Now that this had become a reality, he was incandescent.[649] Birkenhead was both furious and terrified. On the 16th of December, he made his case in *The Sunday Times*, stating: "There is no reason whatever why the Socialist Party should be allowed at this moment to take office... Socialism must be fought, first, last and all the time. It means one thing, we mean another."[650]

Many within the Cabinet agreed with him and Churchill in the view that Labour was merely a front for more sinister forces. This was even supported by multiple Home Office reports stating that: "some of the ablest brains in the Communist Party are represented in this group and will probably exercise considerable influence on the policy of the Labour Research Department, which in turn is an important factor in the Labour movement."[651] But the situation was out of Conservative hands: Asquith stayed true to his belief that the Labour Party should have the right to try and rule, and Baldwin was powerless to intervene.[652] Birkenhead, alongside Austen Chamberlain, attempted to oust Baldwin in favour a new Coalition Government with Lloyd George's Liberals. As Birkenhead informed Lord Riddell, it was his belief that the "incapacity and inferiority of the present government would prove so ineffective in difficult times ahead that the country will soon get tired of them and call for abler men."[653] The threats seemed to come from everywhere – Birkenhead and Austen with their wish for coalition and other Hardliners like Churchill for their own means. As a rising junior minister, William Ormsby-Gore worried that "knowing how Birkenhead and Winston dislike Baldwin, one fears that these pushing men may try to play for their own hand".[654] However, any coup seemed doomed to fail as the majority of the party acknowledged the political void that this could create.[655] Indeed, anti-coalitionism was crucial in Baldwin's survival, and the rumours of intrigue against him produced a 'very marked' rally of support from mainstream MPs.[656] Even many of the Diehards

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649 House of Lords Debate, 13 June 1923, Vol 54, cols 475-525

650 The Sunday Times, 16 December 1923

651 Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, 26 October 1922, CAB 24/139/91; Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom. Report, 15 November 1923 - CAB 24/162/65

652 While I understand the premise of Taylor's arguments in his article on the topic it must be said I disagree that the existence of a minority Labour government was seen as a positive by Baldwin. Preferable would have been a strong but opposition Labour Party which still could be used to push anti-socialist unity for the Tories without the risk or humiliation to Baldwin of a Labour stint in power – see Taylor, Stanley Baldwin, Heresthetics and the Realignment of British Politics, British Journal of Political Science, 35(3), 429-463

653 Lord Riddell, *Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, 1918-1923*, London, 1933, p. 400

654 Ormsby-Gore to his mother, 8 November. 1924, Brogyntyn MSS, PEC/10/1/12/26. Cited in Stuart Ball, The legacy of Coalition: fear and loathing in Conservative politics, 1922-1931, *Contemporary British History*, 25, (2011), 65-82

655 Stuart Ball, The Legacy of Coalition: Fear and Loathing in Conservative Politics, 1922-1933, *Contemporary British History*, 25 (2011), 72

656 Parliamentary Archives - Derby to Birkenhead, 11 Dec. 1923 (not sent), Derby MSS, DER(17)/29/1; Ormsby-Gore to Davidson, 9 Dec. 1923,

saw that Baldwin's departure could only further confuse matters, potentially leading to a leadership contest that could allow Labour a free hand in government.[657] Indeed, with Labour taking office, the mood in the Party would soon switch from infighting towards attacking the new and more powerful enemy of socialism, and for many Bolshevism. By the summer of 1924, Baldwin once again would be secure in his position.[658]

It was a mood of hysteria among the Hardliners in Cabinet that was echoed and perhaps inflamed by one in the press who clearly showed the strength of the opinion that Labour equated to Bolshevism. The *English Review* in 1923 published an article describing the importance of opposing the powers of Communism and Socialism, arguing that "The disruptive forces which tear in Britain at the roots of civilisation are represented by the Socialists and Communists, to oppose whom is the duty of every god-fearing man and woman in the land."[659] The *Saturday Review* attacked Labour on a number of fronts, stating that it had "left the Communists in organised gangs to intimidate men and maul women" and that it was not a party of labour at all "but one of international Socialists in all their ramifications."[660] The *English Review* also believed, in dramatic fashion, that: "the sun of England seems menaced with final eclipse. For the first time in her history the party of revolution approach their hands to the helm of the State... with the design of destroying the very basis of civilised life." The *National Review* continued the theme with a leading article that spoke of the publication's deep regret at "the unspeakable humiliation of an anti-national government."[661] *The Patriot* believed that history showed that the election of a moderate subversive government had "always been the prelude to bloody revolution".[662] A writer of the time warned that Britain would now follow the path of Bolshevik Russia, asking, "Why should the Socialists of Great Britain be differentiated from the Bolsheviks of Russia?"[663]

No surprise, then, that some Conservative supporters began to panic. So terrible was the perceived threat that, on hearing the news that Labour had won office, one Sussex family packed up all of its plates and

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Norton-Griffiths to Davidson, 12 Dec. 1923, Davidson MSS, 168.

657 Gretton to Croft, 4 Feb. 1924, Croft MSS (Churchill College, Cambridge), CRFT/1/12/GR1.

658 *The Amery Diaries*: Volume 1: 1896–1929, p. 375

659 Evening News, 30 July 1924

660 Saturday Review, 15 December. 1923,

661 Richard W. Lyman, *The First Labour Government 1924*, New York 1957, p. 81

662 The Patriot, January 1924, pp. 341-349, as seen in White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution*, p. 206

663 Nesta H. Webster, *Secret Societies and Subversive Movements*, London, 1924, pp. 339-343

valuables and headed to the coast "before the Bolsheviks closed the Channel ports."[664] Baldwin himself was inundated with letters, including a number from the press barons. The editor of the Conservative *Morning Post* (Howell Arthur Gwynne) wrote to the Prime Minister to pass on his view that, "Bolshevism is a disease and an epidemic. As long as it can find fresh victims it will continue, but if it is surrounded by a *cordon sanitaire,* like any other epidemic it will die out."[665]

Baldwin had sought peace but his failings electorally and the rise of Labour would now only fuel the divides within his Cabinet. The subsequent recognition of Russia by MacDonald, trade deal negotiations and scandals surrounding the Labour Party and Bolshevism would play a major part in not only the election of 1924 but in reinforcing the views of the Hardliners in the Conservative Cabinet up until the breach of 1927. It would also lead Baldwin, the moderate, into a brutal anti-Bolshevik attack on Labour in order to win back power, perhaps further unleashing demons in the Party that he had up until then been determined to keep in check.

The Labour government and the 1924 election

Though this thesis does not look at the Labour government itself, this period in office and the subsequent election campaign are of importance to understanding the attitude of the Conservative Cabinet on Bolshevism and, as they saw it, its links with Labour. Despite the fact that by 1924 the Communists of Great Britain were effectively barred from Labour, the Hardliners in Baldwin's ranks wasted no time in launching attacks on Henderson and MacDonald. In the Westminster Abbey by-election in March 1924, Churchill, standing as an Anti-Socialist but with considerable Conservative support, declared in his speeches that the mildness of the Labour government was deceptive. In one he stated, "How well the Socialist Government is doing! How moderate and general they are! I say there is no correspondence between this glassy surface and the turbulent currents we know are flowing underneath."[666] It was a speech that was widely reported throughout Britain despite his narrow defeat to the leadership-backed Conservative candidate, O. W.

664 As described in Lewis Chester, Stephen Fay and Hugo Young, *The Zinoviev Letter,* 1967, pp. 17-18
665 The Baldwin Papers, Gwynne to Baldwin, 14 October 1923, MSS Volume 114 – F.2 Foreign Affairs - 1923
666 The Times, 12 March, 1924

Nicholson.[667] Birkenhead too made it clear that the moderation of Henderson, MacDonald, Snowden and Clynes was a deliberate smokescreen to achieve office, like Kerensky, serving their historic purpose as stool-pigeons for the real revolutionaries now sheltering behind them.[668] Such was his anger and combativeness on the issue that Baldwin was even being warned by friends that Birkenhead was making any form of unity of message on the issue very difficult.[669] It is interesting to note that though Bolshevism was the topic most likely to set off the ire of Birkenhead, it was not the only one; indeed his speeches on a series of issues had led to serious concerns in the Conservative Party that he would lose them voters – especially women.[670]

In reality, MacDonald was despised in Moscow and seen as an obstacle to true revolution. Indeed, in June of that year, the King's Secretary had even taken the time to send MacDonald a copy of the Russian Communist publication *Pravda* to show how much was dedicated to a political attack on him and the British Labour Party.[671] The fact that the truth was very different from the propaganda seemed to be of little concern to many leading Conservatives; however, some justified their potentially duplicitous actions by reasoning that it helped to save Britain from the scourge of Socialism. There is little evidence to show whether those in Cabinet truly believed these scare stories or not, but perhaps given the hatred many felt towards the ideology, they neither knew nor cared, and were happy to have such a helpful narrative on their side. It is also notable that in this there was no divide: the Hardliners led the way while all of the others in Cabinet stayed quiet in the pursuit of electoral victory. However, Austen Chamberlain seemed concerned, stating to Baldwin that the continued provocations from Russia were "such as I suppose we have never tolerated from any government."[672]

The beginning of the end for Labour came with the trial of a British communist, J. R. Campbell, who in *Workers Weekly* on the 25th of July called on soldiers to "use your arms on the side of your own class."[673] He was arrested and put on trial for attempting to instigating troops to mutiny, which despite Scotland Yard's

667 Pelling, *Winston Churchill*, p. 288
668 Campbell, *F.E Smith*, p. 654
669 Ormsby-Gore to Baldwin, 29 Jan. 1924, Baldwin MSS, 42/182-7.
670 Report of Central Office opinion in Memo by Davidson & Herbert, 14 Nov. 1923, Ormsby-Gore to Baldwin, 29 Jan. 1924, Baldwin MSS, 42/130-1 &182-7.
671 Pravda 21 June 1924, translated by the British Embassy in Moscow and sent to the Foreign Office; Foreign Office Archive, N 6043/5799/38, 22 July 1924, F.O 371.10498
672 Chamberlain Papers, Chamberlain to Baldwin, 24 July 1925, AC 5/2/81
673 An Open Letter to Fighting Forces, *Workers' Weekly*, 25 July 1924

briefing that it had "caused considerable excitement in communist circles" was not a huge story in the mainstream press.[674] However, on hearing of Campbell's arrest and trial, Labour backbenchers were able to successfully pressure the Cabinet to withdraw the charges. By August, the Conservatives called this a sign of pro-Bolshevik activity and declared that Labour was under the control of the radical left, and a vote of no confidence was called. In the vote, the Conservatives were joined by Asquith's Liberal Party, and as a result Labour lost by 191 to 304.[675] The government had been brought down, largely due to Conservative scare tactics surrounding the threat of Bolshevism in Britain and the danger of a government that was unwilling to oppose it.

With an election called, the key Tory Hardliners from previous debates were again active, repeating their familiar assertions that Labour was little more than the respectable face of unrestrained Bolshevism. The Duke of Devonshire declared that the Labour government was subject to marching orders from Moscow, whilst Curzon described MacDonald as the secret slave of the Communist party, going on to state that: "Socialism is a creed of despair. It is founded on the misery and discontent of the people... there is a definite (Socialist) plot against this country."[676] *The Times* observed of Labour's proposal to set up a national system of electricity generating stations that "some such project was dear to Lenin." Sir Frederick Banbury MP wrote to the Times to warn that: "Socialism begins moderately... but its supporters, once it's started, are unable to control it and anarchy ensues."[677]

Birkenhead – by now a full member of the Hardliners – was extremely vocal. On the Campbell case, he claimed that the Socialists were laying their dirty hands on "the ark and the citadel of British Justice."[678] Going on to state that "we are dealing, as I understand the facts, with a case in which the left wing of Socialism has been allowed to deflect the arm of justice".[679]

Other speeches were just as strong, claiming that MacDonald and the "extremist gang which rode on his

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674 Special Branch Reports on Revolutionary organisations, No 267, 14 August 1924. RMP, PRO, 30/69/220
675 Cabinet Conclusions, 6 August 1924, CAB 23/48/23
676 House of Commons Debate, 26 June 1924, Vol 175, cols 635-749
677 *The Economist*, 12 January 1924, p.49: The Times, 12 December, 1923
678 Birkenhead Speech at Carlisle, 27 Sept 1924, cited in Campbell, F.E Smith, p. 672
679 *The Times*, 2 Oct 1924

back" were all "admired and subsidised friends of the Soviets."[680] In another speech, he loudly proclaimed, "Britain for the British, not Britain for the Bolsheviks!"[681] He also said, "I do not think the people of this country will allow it to be made an annexe of Moscow."[682] Lastly, he claimed that MacDonald, "under a mask of moderation, which he is only just beginning to lay aside, […] has been in open sympathy with the Russian cause and under the influence of extremists of his own party, most of whom are tools, whether paid or unpaid, of the Soviet murderers."[683]

It was at this point that Churchill, having crossed the floor again, was standing for election in Epping – a seat he would go onto win as a Constitutional Candidate (a Conservative in all but name and a title quickly dropped with the offer of the Treasury) in 1924, though his correspondence does show that he received funding and support from Conservative Headquarters.[684] The reasons for his return to the Conservatives were many, but one was certainly his personal drift to the right – a trend perhaps solidified as a consequence of his anti-Bolshevik campaign, or perhaps a key impact of the debates on Bolshevism in the Cabinet at this time. Churchill's views on Labour and Socialism had hardened too, with the Labour Government in 1924 described by him as "A Socialist monstrosity… corrupting the character of the British Nation" that would reduce Britain to "chaos and starvation" and whose supporters were agents of "atheism and revolution". [685] He used his platform to push his anti-Socialist message and in public debates constantly attacked Labour and the threat that the party posed to Britain.[686] In one such address, he stated that "the eagerness with which the Socialist Party grasped at the chance of ruling in a minority, their reluctance to yield up this unwholesome power, show clearly the undemocratic nature of their minds."[687] In another statement, his rhetoric reached an even higher pitch:

> Let Britannia cast off the ridiculous and dishonourable disguises and rags made in Germany and made in Russia with which the Socialists seek to drape her. Let her reveal herself once again, sedate,

680 Birkenhead Speeches at London 17 October 1924 and Liverpool 22 Oct 1924 cited in Campbell, F.E Smith, p. 672
681 Birkenhead Speech at Aberdeen, 24 October 1924, cited in Campbell, F.E Smith, p.672
682 Birkenhead Speech at Brentford, 25 October 1924 , cited in Campbell, F.E Smith p. 673
683 Birkenhead Speech at Portsmouth, 28 October 1924, cited in Campbell, F.E Smith, p. 673
684 The Churchill Archives, Letter from Unionist Central Office to WSC, 15th October 1924, CHAR 2/135/77
685 Rose, *Churchill*, p.176
686 Pelling, *Winston Churchill*, p.292
687 *The Times*, 13 October, 1924

> majestic on her throne, grasping the trident with determination, and displaying on her shield not the foul Red Flag of Communist revolution, but the Union Jack.[688]

Baldwin, seen by the nation as a moderate and a pragmatist, gave the Conservative attacks a sense of real legitimacy. He called on Labour to, "rid itself of the extremist forces which seem to control it."[689] In one of his key election speeches, given in Southend on the 20th of October, he made a number of references to a recent speech that Zinoviev had given to the assembled masses of the Comintern in which he had attacked Baldwin, shouting that: "It makes my blood boil to read of the way Monsieur Zinoviev is speaking of the Prime Minister of Great Britain today. At one time there went up a cry of 'Hands off Russia', my word! I think it is time someone said to Russia "Hands off England!"[690] It was an attack that Baldwin felt he could make in earnest: indeed, a conversation with the palace shows just this, with Baldwin describing the Russian treaties as something that the nation condemns and stating that MacDonald, "instead of smashing the extremists, has allowed them to smash him."[691]

The pivotal moment of the election campaign was to come on the 23rd of October when the Zinoviev letter was published in the *Daily Mail*. The document, which had allegedly been smuggled to the government, seemed to show instructions from the Comintern to Britain's Communists, asking them to step up agitation and to step up infiltration of the Labour Party and military.[692] The Foreign Office had received it in late September and, in an unsurprisingly partisan move, had decided to pass it to the Central Office, who in passing it to the media made it public along with a letter of response to Russia's Ambassador.[693] The letter was an electoral bombshell, seemingly proving that all of the attacks the Conservatives had made upon the Labour Government and the threat of the far left in Britain were true. The letter itself is now known to be a forgery; the Russians quickly denied that it was genuine, and MacDonald stated to *the Times* that it was a "political plot".[694] However, in Cabinet they were forced to admit that if true, it represented a threat to the

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688 *The Times*, 10 October, 1924

689 Ramsden, *The Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, p. 203

690 *The Times*, 21 October 1924

691 Williamson, *Baldwin (Eds), Baldwin Papers*, Memo for the King, 7th Oct 1924, p. 159

692 *Daily Mail*, 25 October 1924

693 L. Chester, S. Fay and H. Young., *The Zinoviev Letter,* London, 1967, Christopher Andrew, The British Secret Service and Anglo Soviet relations I: From the Trade Agreement to the Zinoviev Letter, *The Historic Journal*, 20, No.3 (1977), 673-706 and John Ferris and Uri Bar-Joseph, The Intelligence Services and the Zinoviev letter, *Intelligence and National Security*, 8 (1993) 100-137

694 *The Times*, 28 October, 1924

nation.[695] It is still debatable whether Conservative politicians at the time believed in the letter's authenticity; certainly they seemed to in 1924, and a later Cabinet Committee did conclude that it was genuine, as did MI5 at the time.[696]

Again no voices were raised in the Shadow Cabinet requesting caution or moderation. In Sheffield, Baldwin used the content of the letter to great political effect, telling the crowd, "There is still a very great mystery surrounding the conduct of the government in this matter, but there is one quarter in which there is no mystery, and that is the attitude of the Russian Government."[697] Churchill was more forthright, telling an audience in Cambridge that "the socialists can think of nothing but Moscow. They look upon it with admiration, almost adoration."[698]

Churchill was also now back in Parliament as a Tory, having won his seat, giving the Hardliners back a natural leader. Neville Chamberlain and Baldwin were naturally wary, seeing him as a disrupting force who would push his own ideas and would increase splits in the Cabinet. Both were already angry at the way in which Churchill had linked great swathes of the working class with militancy and bolshevism, worrying that rhetoric of that kind may lead to real extremism.[699]

It was an election campaign dominated by the threat of Russian Bolshevism, and far left politics. Baldwin had done little or nothing to temper the language of the Hardliners and, though he a moderate, even a sceptic, when it came to the influence of Bolshevism, he had nonetheless allowed such forces to be unleashed in the hope of electoral victory. As Churchill wrote to him in late 1924, failure to follow through with the harsh measures mooted would make it look like mere scare tactics during the election.[700] What remained to be seen was if Baldwin could once again pull them under his control, or if he would reap the whirlwind.

Baldwin's second government: Internal divisions and the Red Scare returns

695 The Zinoviev Letter memo, As seen in Cabinet, 11 November 1924, CAB 24/168/87

696 Gill Bennett, *A Most Extraordinary and Mysterious Business: The Zinoviev Letter of 1924*, London, 1999; Charles Loch Mowatt, *Britain Between The Wars:1918-1940*, Cambridge, 1955, p.193

697 *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 28 October, 1924

698 Churchill, Nothing But Moscow, October. 10, 1924: Women"s Meeting, Cambridge Park Hall, in Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897-1963, London 1974, p. 3487. Page number is correct, the collection on Churchill's speeches does not reset page count with each volume.

699 Birmingham University Library, N Chamberlain Papers, N.C Diary, 17 and 21 March 1924, NC2/22

700 The Baldwin Papers, Churchill to Baldwin, 14 November 1924, Volume 114 – F.2 Foreign Affairs - 1923

By 1925, with the events of Black Friday, the defeat of the Clydesiders, and the continuing struggle of the miners, a new and more militant mood had fallen over the left-wing movements in Britain. The idea of a General Strike, first advocated a century earlier by Quaker and labour agitator William Benbow in 1815, was now being discussed as a very real threat.[701] With economic depression hitting the nation, more than a million working men unemployed – largely from the old staple industries of shipbuilding, engineering and mining – and the fallout from Black Friday, the more militant left was taking control of the union movement. The powerful Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) was under new left-wing leadership: Frank Hodges was replaced as General Secretary by A. J. Cook, who many believed had communist sympathies, but even the whole TUC itself was viewed with suspicion

A red dawn seemed to be rising on the left, while on the right there was a new-look, more hard-line Conservative Cabinet, with right wingers such as Churchill as Chancellor, and Joynson-Hicks as Home Secretary. Curzon, who would pass away in March, was a fading figure, but his loss to the Hardliners was balanced by the rise of men such as Joynson-Hicks (‘Jix’) and others. It seemed to both sides that a confrontation was soon to come. Already splits were increasing, with Birkenhead now firmly against Baldwin, while Neville Chamberlain was clashing with Jix, whom he saw as a pompous aggressive fool.[702] For Baldwin and his Cabinet, the question was how to deal with such a conflict. Birkenhead did remain friends with Austen but such was his closeness to Churchill that Amery described how a committee which Birkenhead chaired ended “almost inevitably with F. E. in the chair to back up Winston.”[703] The temperature had been steadily rising during Baldwin's leadership, with the labour disputes of the previous years largely settled by compromise and temporary measures. Should it be through the leadership's policy of negotiation and compromise, or by force, as advocated by Churchill and his political allies?

Baldwin's political conflict with Churchill and the Hardliners in this Cabinet was based on a fundamental disagreement over how the threat of domestic revolution should be addressed, but for some it was also

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701 Niles Carpenter, William Benbow and the Origin of General Strike, *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (May, 1921), pp. 491-499; Patrick Renshaw, *The General Strike*, London, 1975; Walter Citrine, *Men and Work*, London, 1976, p. 210

702 David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain* pp. 400 -409

703 *Amery Diaries*, 15 July 1925, p. 416

personal – his friend J. C. C. Davidson, Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty, warned him in 1925 that still, despite his successes as leader, "the Old Gang were out to unseat him."[704] Within the party, Churchill manoeuvred to be seen as the antithesis of Baldwin and his allies. His rise to Chancellor was not a promotion well received by many of his colleagues; Amery, for example, believed it was disastrous.[705] Baldwin, however, perhaps saw it as keeping him away from the real class conflicts, though this hope was to be short-lived. Churchill had in no way mellowed in his stance on Bolshevism, stating in the election campaign: "The eagerness with which the Socialist Party grasped at the chance of ruling in a minority, their reluctance to yield up this unwholesome power, show clearly the undemocratic nature of their minds."[706] He also described Bolshevism as "the subversive movement of socialism."[707] As G. M. Young states in his biography, "Baldwin was at all times sensitive to the moral challenge underlying the Socialist creed: Churchill was not."[708]

Baldwin did, of course, have his allies in Cabinet: men such Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland, Austen Chamberlain and now his younger half-brother, the Minister for Health, Neville Chamberlain. Baldwin's sensitivity to the challenges facing those on the left, combined with his image as a man with a strong desire to avoid conflict, gave him a strong appeal to the nation; however, it also led to constant disputes with the Hardliners, who saw him privately as a "semi-Socialist."[709] Indeed, as Duff Cooper stated: "His love of peace could easily be mistaken for indolence and his desire to be fair to political opponents could be represented as secret sympathy with their views."[710] From the election in 1924 onwards, these internal divisions were intensifying. However, what was not helping was the decision by Baldwin to disband the policy secretariat group that Amery had been instrumental in setting up during his time in opposition. Despite Amery's protestations, this led to a disconnect between Baldwin and his MPs – something Churchill seized upon on occasion.[711]

In Parliament, the Hardliners had led a key battle for trade union legislation, strongly supporting Frederick

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704 James Robert Rhodes, *Memoirs of a Conservative: J.C.C Davidson*, p. 215

705 *Amery, Diaries*, I, p. 390-1

706 *The Times*, 13 October 1924 (election address)

707 Winston S. Churchill, The Subversive Movement of Socialism, Oct. 15, 1924: Wanstead, in Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897-1963, 3490.

708 Young, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 70

709 Morgan, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p. 256

710 Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, p. 27

711 *Amery Diaries*, 14 Nov 1924 and Baldwin Papers: Memorandum by Amery 'The Policy Secretariat', Baldwin Papers 48

Macquisten MP's Private Members Bill seeking to cut Trade Union funding in March 1925.[712] The Cabinet had discussed the issue in late February where disagreement had been clear, in the end with the Cabinet only agreeing that the government reaction to the Bill be decided by a separate Cabinet committee.[713] This truce was dashed when the Prime Minister intervened after the Bill was debated and pushed strongly for (and securing) its defeat, arguing passionately:

> I want my party to-day to make a gesture to the country of a similar nature, and to say to them: "We have our majority; we believe in the justice of this Bill which has been brought in to-day, but we are going to withdraw our hand… We, at any rate, are not going to fire the first shot. We stand for peace. We stand for the removal of suspicion in the country. We want to create an atmosphere, a new atmosphere in a new Parliament for a new age, in which the people can come together."[714]

Despite having greatly angered those on the right of his party, Baldwin was adamant that moderation was necessary to avoid all-out class war. He later published his words alongside two of his other speeches on the topic under the title *Peace and Goodwill in Industry*.[715] In his policy, he was also confident that he had the support of the King on the matter. Having discussed the Bolshevik situation in their post-election meeting, the King had informed Baldwin of the "importance of combatting the idea of anything like class war, which the extremists were inclined to make into a sort of War Cry."[716]

In foreign policy, too, the two sides had clashed over the issue of continuing the Labour policy of diplomatically recognising Bolshevik Russia. This was opposed by Churchill and Curzon (though his death in March 1925 would take away a key figure from the Cabinet Hardliners); for them, it was the recognition of an ideological evil, and one to blame for unrest throughout the Empire. In Cabinet, the issue was raised in early April with Churchill, Joynson-Hicks and Birkenhead all demanding that it be ended and Baldwin, supported by A Chamberlain, Amery and Steel-Maitland supporting caution.[717] As correspondence in late

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712 House of Commons Debate, 06 March 1925 Vol 181 cols 807-33
713 Cabinet Conclusions, 18 February 1925, CAB 23/49/18
714 House of Commons Debate 6 March 1925 vol 181 cc833-97
715 Stanley Baldwin, *'Peace and Goodwill in Industry: Three Speeches'*, London, 1925
716 Williamson and Baldwin, *The Baldwin Papers*, Memo to the King, 5 November 1924, p. 163
717 Cabinet Conclusions, 8 April 1925, CAB 23/49/29

1924 had shown, the divides on the matter were indeed wide, and Churchill, still on his anti-Bolshevik crusade, had made it clear to Chamberlain that the recognition of Russia granted by Labour must be undone: "The more I reflect on the matter, the more sure I am that we should revoke the recognition of the Soviet Government, which was decided on by MacDonald."[718] Chamberlain, however, was firmly against this, telling his family in later 1924 that the idea "does no good and some harm."[719] A committee was set up to examine the question. Austen Chamberlain agreed to examine the evidence and to make a proposal on action to take. He, Cave and Cecil were members and largely moderate; the inclusion of Birkenhead and to some extent Balfour gave the Hardliners a voice. However, the moderates won and relations were continued.[720] Despite this, the issue was raised again in May and the debate would continue over the next two years while recognition continued, with Baldwin wary of any inflammatory politics and sure in his pragmatic push for much-needed trade with Russia.[721]

It was a difficult task, overshadowed by the growing threat of a General Strike. To some, it even proved the existence of a Bolshevik-inspired threat, with many no doubt casting their minds back to the Trades Union Congress of 1921, which had stated that any British action in the Russo-Polish War would be resisted by such a strike. Now, by 1925, the threat seemed even greater: with the birth of the Communist Party in Britain and the claims of secret links between them, the Labour Party and Russia, a red scare had once again descended upon the Conservative Party.[722] By early 1925, claims that Bolshevik groups and the IRA were operating together had also resurfaced – claims exaggerated by the intelligence services due to their dislike of Bolshevism and in order to gain funding, but still deeply shocking to many in the government.[723] Baldwin was by now also receiving high numbers of letters from both party members and backbench MPs warning about the danger of the Labour Party. John Gretton MP was so alarmed that he warned both Baldwin and Steel-Maitland that, "I believe that the struggle is inevitable and that those who are not with us are against us, and it is dangerous and impolitic to disguise as moderation what is really heading to revolution."[724]

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[718] Chamberlain Papers, Churchill to Chamberlain, 14 November 1924, Chamberlain MSS, AC 5/1/56

[719] Chamberlain Papers, Chamberlain to Ida and H. Chamberlain, 11 July 1925, Chamberlain MSS, AC 5/1/358

[720] C. Andrew, 'British Intelligence and the Breach with Russia in 1927, *Historical Journal 25*, 4 (1982), 958

[721] Cabinet Conclusions, May 20 1925, CAB 23/50/6

[722] Stephen White, British Labour in Soviet Russia, 1920, *EHR*, 119., No. 432 (1994), 621-40 and Macfarlane, *Hands off Russia*, pp. 126-52; Thrope, *The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, pp. 777-800

[723] Emmet O Connor, Communists, Russia, and the IRA, 1920-1923, *HJ*, 46, No.1 (2003), 115-31

[724] The Baldwin Papers, Gretton to Baldwin, 12 February 1925, Volume 10 D.1 Home Affairs and; The Baldwin Papers, Gretton to Steel-Maitland, 12 February 1925, Volume 10 D.1 Home Affairs

It was not just those in Westminster who were scared; indeed, the hysteria over the issue was not limited to the political elite in London. Nationwide, Conservative leaflets described the threat of a General Strike and the Communist influence behind it in emotive and base terms. One stated that "the Bolsheviks were not only murderers and ruffians and enemies of private property" but that they were also active atheists and had even "nationalized women for sexual purposes."[725] At the forefront of this mood was, once again, Winston Churchill. His views were summed up in an electrifying speech delivered in Battersea that December:

> Behind Socialism stands Communism, behind Communism, Moscow, that dark sinister evil power – a band of cosmopolitan conspirators… this plaguish band of conspirators are aiming constantly to overthrow all civilized countries and reduce every nation to the level of misery to which they have plunged the great people of Russia. They strike everywhere, by every method, through every channel which is open them, but there is no country at which they strike so much as this island of ours.[726]

For Churchill, all that remained was to face off against this threat in a final and conclusive battle for Britain's future. But despite the rise of hysteria and fear among Conservative ranks, Baldwin continued his push for unity and peace in the country, avoiding the rhetoric of the Hardliners. Speaking to the chamber in March 1925, he made clear what he believed was the only hope for the relationship between government and trade unions:

> We find ourselves after these two years in power, in possession of the greatest majority our Party has ever had... How did we get there? It was because, rightly or wrongly, we succeeded in creating the impression that we stood for stable government and for peace in the country, between all classes of the community... Although I know that there are those who work for different ends from most of us in this House, there are many in all ranks and parties who will re-echo my prayer: Give peace in our time, O' Lord.[727]

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725 Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Weekend, a Social History of Britain, 1918-1939*, London, 1961, p. 148

726 Churchill, Socialist Softies and Fatheads, 11 December 1925: Town Hall, Battersea, Churchill: His Complete Speeches, p. 3809

727 House of Commons Debate, 6 March 1925 Vol 181 cols 833-97

It was an approach that won him allies in the party as much as it created foes. An article in *The Times* signed 'backbencher' portrayed his qualities: “His refusal to treat his fellow countrymen as enemies... Faced with elements on both sides clamouring for class war, he is calling to aid the English spirit of which he is incomparably the most complete representative today.”[728] Neville Chamberlain made clear his support, writing to the Prime Minister: “Lincoln had at all costs to preserve the unity of the North. You have to preserve the unity of the Country.”[729]

It is from this understanding of Baldwin's views, and those of his Parliamentary opponents, that the splits within the party during the events of Red Friday and the General Strike can be understood. It was due to a belief in compromise and peace that Baldwin decided to negotiate with the miners in 1925 and, as will be explored later, created a compromise that infuriated many in the Cabinet. But for Baldwin it was merely a continuation of what he had believed in all along; as he later wrote to his friend Lord Irwin (from 1934 known as Viscount Halifax) in India: “I still think we were right in buying off the strikes of 1925, though it proved once more the cost of backing democracy. Democracy has arrived at a gallop in England and I feel all the time it is a race for life. Can we educate them before the crash comes?”[730]

Conclusion

The years from 1920 to 1924 had been difficult ones for the Conservative Party, seeing the splits between the Hardliners and moderates of the Cabinet (and shadow Cabinet) continuing to dominate domestic politics. The rise of Stanley Baldwin to the top job could perhaps have led to a change in approach; this was, after all, a Conservative Prime Minister operating outside of a coalition and a man openly critical of Lloyd George; however, this was not the case. He, too, was willing to operate, or forced into operating, a middle-way approach to the domestic threat of Bolshevism and left-wing unrest – something that would come to define his government as much as his predecessor's. Though perhaps it must be said that any examination of his very anti-Bolshevik election campaign in 1924 would not have led many of his colleagues to believe it.

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728 *The Times*, 3 March, 1925

729 Quoted in Young, Stanley Baldwin, pp. 101-2

730 Baldwin to Irwin, 26 June, 1927, as cited by Robin Harris, The Conservatives: A History, London, 2011 p. 296 and Stuart Ball, Portrait of a Party: The Conservative Party in Britain 1918-1945, Oxford, 2013, p. 54

Once again, this period sees a middle-way approach being adopted by the Prime Minister, in a period dominated by elections, Baldwin managed to both placate the Hardliners in his Cabinet with an aggressive anti-Bolshevik and Socialist campaign, and yet also remain firmly in control as a moderate with his post-election statements. The key aim of defeating Labour had been achieved and in doing so Baldwin had allowed the ardent anti-Bolshevik elements in his Cabinet off the leash. The links between Socialism and Bolshevism had been used to their full advantage and, in doing so, the Conservative Party had achieved a majority government. Despite this, Baldwin had also managed to keep control of a fractured Party in the aftermath of 1923, maintaining his position against more extreme elements of the Party such as Curzon, who would have undoubtedly increased the class war pressure already high across the country.

Despite hopes that new leadership might signal a change in the Cabinet's factionalism on the issue of Bolshevism, it was not to be. The Hardliners narrowly missed out on having a key member, Curzon, take the top job and their power within the Cabinet continued to be strong enough to have an impact on policy-making. With Joyson-Hicks now Home Secretary, Churchill and Birkenhead had a new powerful ally and one that helped this small group to push the debate in Cabinet on the threat of domestic Bolshevism. This saw the Pandora's Box of anti-Bolshevik rhetoric opened by Baldwin during the 1924 election campaign, lessening his ability to reign back the Hardliners in later Cabinet debates, and pushing the left into a more aggressive attitude. In many ways, this set the scene for the General Strike of 1926. The Hardliners in this period were also responsible for pushing policy around the debates on trade union legislation.

The moderates too had new figures join their ranks: Neville Chamberlain, Steel-Maitland and to some extent Amery would all become clear supporters of Baldwin's moderation. Most importantly, the rise of Baldwin himself to his position of authority would ensure that the powerful Hardliners still could not dictate policy in the way they had wished. The silent grouping of the now Conservative-only Cabinet was perhaps more engaged from this point onwards in these debates, and yet as can be seen, they were happy to remain outside the key debates in Cabinet. All of the political circumstances had certainly changed a great deal and a new Prime Minister led a new Conservative Cabinet; however, the issue of Bolshevism would continue to lead to

debates and splits within Cabinet and a strong group of Hardliner members would still push Baldwin's policy away from the moderation he believed in.

Chapter 7: "A challenge to Parliament, and the road to anarchy and ruin!" 1925 - 1927

"This thing is not finished. The danger is not over. Sooner or later, the question has to be fought out by the people of the land. Is England and Parliament going to be ruled by a Cabinet or by Trade Union leaders?"[731] *– Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks*

Red Friday and strike preparation: Uneasy peace, fragile truce

By the summer of 1925, the uneasy peace between the unions and the government was coming to an end and internal divisions, brought into the open with the onset of the coal dispute in 1925, threatened to push more extreme policy to the fore. The miners had again called for collective action to halt their falling wages, and the TUC had agreed to take up their protest, pushing for minimum wages to be enshrined in law. In March, the Cabinet debated and were divided on the issue. In the end, with Hardliner pressure, Baldwin agreed that the Coal Mines Minimum Wage Bill would be opposed.[732] The scene was set for a clash and by the summer, the situation was on a knife edge. In Cabinet, the Hardliners and moderates argued how to approach the crisis.

By May, the debate had started up again with the possibility of compromise seeming more and more unlikely. The Hardliners, led by Churchill, Jix and Birkenhead, argued for action. With the Emergency Powers Act, a strike could be crushed; Jix even referred back to his statements in late 1924 that the army could be brought in and all the strikers' roles covered by thousands of volunteers.[733] Baldwin was deeply concerned at the prospect of a General Strike and the class conflict that would come with it, but remained silent.[734] An uneasy period of inaction followed. With the Prime Minister quiet, the Hardliners readied themselves for the next stage of the dispute. The Emergency Powers Act of 1920 gave them immense power, and Churchill, Chamberlain, Birkenhead and Joynson-Hicks all reviewed its powers and made preparations

731 *The Times*, 3 August, 1925
732 Cabinet Conclusions, 25 march 1925, CAB 23/49/27
733 Supply and Transport Organisation: Emergency Committee, 1924, CAB 27/259
734 Cabinet Conclusions, 28 May 1925, CAB 23/50/7

for the upcoming clash.[735]

In July, Baldwin broke his contemplation and sought to regain control of his Cabinet and ensure that the Hardliners were put back in their place. The latter protested, though more were more muted than could have been expected. It was perhaps by this point clear to all in Cabinet, including the Hardliners, that a delay was needed before action could be taken. As Sir John Anderson's report to the Cabinet had stated on July 5th 1925, if a strike occurred immediately, "effective plans on a sufficiently comprehensive scale do not now exist."[736] It was at that moment, with the Cabinet unsure and the nation on the precipice of conflict, that Baldwin returned to the debate, announcing that he would attempt to negotiate with the unions to see if some form of compromise could be achieved.[737] The matter was debated on the 28th in Cabinet and it was agreed that the Prime Minister would launch talks but that there was no deal for any subsidy; most importantly, Churchill won a key victory in that Baldwin had to discuss with him first, then Cabinet, any deal before it was agreed upon.[738] With this decision made, the leaders of the Miners' Union prepared to meet with the Prime Minister, well aware that they could not be seen to capitulate as they had on Black Friday. Herbert Smith, President of the Miners' Association, and Arthur James Cook, the Secretary – a staunch left winger who had been imprisoned twice for his part in strikes and lockouts – met Baldwin on the 29th of July, who missed the Cabinet meeting that evening as a result.[739]

During the talks, the PM made it clear that, "the government is not prepared to give a subsidy to the industry", but much more was at stake and Baldwin, aware of the danger of a general strike, was keen to make a deal to at the very least delay one. Subsidies were put back on the table.[740] An emergency Cabinet meeting was called the next day – 30th of July – and here, after a lengthy debate, a vote was held on the possibility of limited subsidies to ward off the threat of a General Strike. Despite the reservations of a number of key figures, and without a unanimous decision, Baldwin fiercely made his argument for compromise, pointing out the danger if no deal was agreed: "The transport workers would probably strike in

735 Renshaw, *The General Strike*, p. 120
736 National Archives, Home Office reports, July 5th 1925, HO 191
737 Cabinet Conclusions, 22 July 1925, CAB 23/50/19
738 Cabinet Conclusions, 28 July 1925, CAB 23/50/20
739 Cabinet Conclusions, 29 July 1925, CAB 23/50/21
740 TUC Report, 1925 as cited in Laybourne, The General Strike of 1926, p. 47

sympathy. The attitude of the seamen's union is uncertain." Finally, the decision was made to allow a subsidy of nine months to pacify the miners. It was, as Baldwin declared, a choice for the Cabinet "between the national strike and the payment of assistance to the mining industry", and in his words it was clear to the majority that "the later course was less disadvantageous."[741]

The deal was supported by both Chamberlains, Steel-Maitland and Amery; on the other side was Lord Salisbury (Lord Privy Seal), Joynson-Hicks and, to some extent, Churchill (who also felt that he needed more time to prepare for a real clash) and Birkenhead, who also stayed largely quiet. Perhaps for Birkenhead this can be explained by his later comments where on the General Strike of 1926 he stated, "had the quarrel become acute nine months earlier that in did, the great majority of the people of the country would have been with the miners and against the owners."[742] Neville Chamberlain made his views clear – that a general strike would lead to class hate and even war, with the extremists coming to the fore. He continued that the communists exploited the miners and that the best defence against them was reasonable discourse with the Trade Unions. It took two hours of debate before the compromise deal was agreed.[743] The moderates had won but were still unlikely allies, as First Lord of the Admiralty W. C. Bridgeman noted. Neville Chamberlain, for example, struggled with Cecil and Steel-Maitland, and his relationship with Amery too suffered over this period.[744] Bridgman himself was to stay largely out of the conflict – a staunch anti-socialist and Hardliner by nature, he was tempered by his closeness to Baldwin.

The climb-down by the government was announced the following day on the 31st of July to Cabinet; the miners had won a clear victory against Baldwin with their threats to lead a General Strike, gaining a much-needed subsidy in the process. It was a day that would come to be known by both sides as Red Friday. In the House of Commons, Baldwin made a speech the following week to ask for the subsidy and to give his reasons for it, arguing "When you are at the point where we were last Thursday night, you have only two alternatives before you. One alternative was to have a stoppage; the other alternative was to find a way out;

741 Cabinet Conclusion, 30 July 1925, CAB 23/50/22

742 Lord Birkenhead, *Last Essays*, London, 1930, p. 168

743 N.C Diary 9 August 1925, Cabinet Conclusion, 30 July 1925, NC2/22: CAB 23/50/22

744 Shropshire Archives, W.C Bridgeman Papers, found in the Bridgman Note on Cabinet Colleagues 1924-1929, S.R.O. 4629 as cited in Williamson, P (ed.), The Modernisation of the Conservative Politics: The Diaries and Letters of William Bridgeman 1904-1935, London, 1988

there was no third." To his doubters, he also had words: in a barb aimed directly at the Hardliners, he told the House, "[To those who say] 'Oh, you are bound to have a strike; have it now and get it over.' That I call a counsel of despair. It may be that there will be trouble, but it is the duty of statesmanship to try to avoid it, and I think it is a fatal thing to accept the proposition that there is bound to be trouble."[745]

It was to be a controversial decision and one with ramifications lasting until the summer of 1926; the government had played its last card. If the situation were to occur again, it would be politically impossible for another compromise to occur. On top of that, Baldwin now faced a great deal of pressure as the architect of the deal and the key player in the negotiations. The right-wing press were up in arms, describing the deal in emotive language as a defeat of order by the forces of anarchy, and drawing links between the forces of trade unionism and the forces of Bolshevism. The *Daily Mail* described it as a "victory for violence", complaining in an editorial headlined "The White Feather" that "Mr Baldwin's way is not the English way. It is not the English habit to surrender at the first shout of a bully… The whole transaction is a pitiful sell-out for all those who worked so hard for a Conservative victory at the election."[746] [747] Perhaps most embarrassing of all for Baldwin and his Cabinet was the intervention of Ramsay MacDonald to say that Red Friday was a mistake – one he believed would "encourage the revolutionaries to greater efforts."[748]

The usual suspects in the Cabinet were angry, both at having been forced to back down in the face of the miners' demands and because of their embarrassment at the hostile public reaction to their collective decision. A minority had openly voted against subsidies (though sadly their names are not recorded in the Cabinet minutes), a group likely to have included Churchill and Joynson-Hicks, with the latter even openly discussing the splits in the Cabinet with friends. Sir Laming Worthington-Evans (Secretary of State for War) was also increasingly in their camp. Indeed, Churchill is quoted by Citrine as telling Cook in the aftermath of the events that: "You have done it over my blood-stained corpse. I have got to find the money for it now."[749] However, could this outward show of anger have been hiding a more nuanced approach from the Chancellor? There is no doubt that Churchill was ready for a fight with what he saw as the British forces of Bolshevism;

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745 House of Commons Debate, 6 August 1925 Vol 187 cols 1581-697
746 *The Daily Mail*, 31 July 1925
747 Symons, *The General Strike*, p. 17
748 W.H. Crook, *The General Strike. A Study of Labour's Tragic Weapon in Theory and Practice*, North Carolina, 1933, p. 294
749 Walter Citrine, *Men and Work*, p. 142

but, as many historians suggest, could the nation's lack of preparation for such a fight have led to him making an uneasy alliance with Baldwin over subsidies?[750] Certainly in a meeting of Cabinet on the 5th of August, Churchill and the Hardliners made it clear that the truce should be used to "make more elaborate arrangements then at the present exist for maintaining vital national services in the event of a strike."[751]

What is clear is the urgency that Churchill and his allies, like the Home Secretary, quickly adopted in preparing the nation for a General Strike. Emergency plans did of course exist, but in the months following July 1925 they were to be modified and improved a great deal. Plans were drawn up on a range of things, such as the Supply and Transport Committee's work on food and resource stockpiling, the recruitment of volunteers and the work of the civil service in the case of a strike.[752] Some extreme examples can also be found; for instance, there was an admiralty report on how submarines could be deployed in the case of unrest.[753] One area that was obviously a concern for Joynson-Hicks was that at that time not enough volunteers were being found and recruited to deal with any immediate crisis effectively.[754] On the 3rd of August, he made it clear in *The Times* that the fight was coming and that the government needed to prepare itself:

> This thing is not finished. The danger is not over. Sooner or later the question has to be fought out by the people of the land. Is England and Parliament going to be ruled by a Cabinet or by Trade Union leaders? If a Soviet was established here... a grave position would arise.[755]

Baldwin too was being swayed by the Hardliners, and the knowledge that the fragile truce negotiated in July would not hold for long – and more concessions would be politically disastrous. On the 6th of August, the Prime Minister, in a speech to the House of Commons (reported in the press the following day), announced a hardening in policy, asserting that the government would not be held to ransom by the threat of violence. Referencing Red Friday, he stated that, "Peace was a matter of will, and those whose deliberate policy was

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750 A. Mason, The Government and the General Strike, *International Review of Social History*, 14, No. 1 (1969), 1-21; Pelling, Winston Churchill, p. 309

751 Cabinet Conclusions , August 5 1925, Cab 23/50

752 Cabinet memo, Volunteering in the case of a Strike, 12 October 1925, CAB 24/175/27; National Archives, Home Office Report, General Strike Emergency Arrangements, 1925, HO 144/6116

753 National Archives, Admiralty Papers, General Strike and the use of Submarines, dated 1924-1926, ADM 116/2438

754 G.A. Phillips, *The General Strike: The Politics of Industrial Conflict*, London, 1976, p.65 and Cabinet Minutes, 30 July 1925, CAB 23/50

755 *The Times*, 3 August, 1925

war should reflect on the sad climax they would bring to the evolution of popular government. They would also learn that the community, when compelled to fight would develop forces which would astonish the crimes of anarchy."[756]

In a matter of days, Baldwin had moved from compromise to a warning. Was this hardening of rhetoric due to pressure within Cabinet or, like the Hardliners, had the PM also seen Red Friday as an opportunity to buy preparation time before a final clash? It seems likely from the information available that Baldwin's position was based on a firm belief in peace, compromise and understanding, as well as a keen sense of the public mood. It is also likely that for the Hardliners, it was a matter of fighting when they were ready, with the subsidies buying nine months of preparation time. This would explain why many Hardliners deferred to Baldwin; there was no real Cabinet clash over the issue of Red Friday – indeed as Churchill himself said on the 10th of December 1925, "We decided to postpone the crisis in the hope of averting it, or, if not averting it, of coping effectively when the time came."[757] Though as always with politicians, it must be remembered that unpopular decisions are often excused with the benefit of hindsight, but it does certainly make sense that, if these men believed that a fight was to come, it should come when the government had the best chance of victory.

Whether or not Red Friday can be attributed to the government's need for preparation time, the extra weeks and months gained after it were not wasted. As Mason notes, the government spent the time preparing as best as it could for the conflict, with the Hardliners leading the way.[758]

Joynson-Hicks was foremost in the push to be ready for an eventual conflict with the left, as he saw in it a clear and present threat, asking his constituents in August, "Is England Governed by Parliament and by the Cabinet or by a handful of trade union leaders?"[759] Under his orders, the country was divided into ten districts, each with a Civil Commissioner in control and whose job was to organise local activity, especially recruitment. Due to a report from Jix on the 7th of August 1925, government staff were stationed in all

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756 House of Commons Debate, 6 August 1925, Vol 5, cols. 1612; The Times, 7 August, 1925
757 Cited in Tom Bell, *The British Communist Party, A Short History*, London 1927, p. 109
758 A. Mason, *The Government and the General Strike*, pp. 1-21
759 *The Times*, 6 August 1925

transport hubs and volunteer networks were set up. It was a detailed plan aimed to deal with any eventuality, and as a result, naval personnel were quickly trained to operate power stations, a convoy system for food was established and large stocks of coal, food and fuel were built up. In fact, the government had begun to build up its food supplies as early as January 1925. By the end of April 1926, they aimed to have seven weeks' worth of flour and wheat, tea, sugar, and many other resources.[760]

The Home Secretary also announced in September the creation of the OMS (Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies) – a group designed to allow volunteers to operate trains, buses and other supply routes in the event of a strike. This initiative had been discussed in secret in Cabinet in August with the support of his Hardliner allies.[761] He stated to the Cabinet that, "the most difficult as well as perhaps the most important aspect of the problem... [is] the protection of workers of all kinds who are prepared to continue at work." He went on to say that some form of Defence Force, as seen during the strikes of 1921, may well be needed to protect them. The Home Secretary was not finished there, though, even moving tanks and ships to ports and bases near major urban centres, telling the Cabinet "on occasion it is useful to send a warship to a port where disturbances are threatened."[762] When the Cabinet met again on the 13th, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans was also putting pressure on the Prime Minister to react, citing the increasing provocation of the Communists and their links with organised Labour.[763]

The use of the OMS, special constables, public service workers, dispatch riders and drivers was seen by the Cabinet and Joynson-Hicks especially as vital to government success. It was for the latter and his Hardliner allies a basic weapon for use against the unions.[764] As well as protecting his future volunteers with the military, some more controversial decisions were also made, such as allowing members of the British Fascist Party, albeit under the name and organisation of Loyalists, to join the OMS as muscle should violence break out.[765] The Law on Sedition and Strikes was also strengthened, on the recommendation of Attorney General Douglas Hogg, ensuring that the state had power to prosecute those preaching revolution and setting out once

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760 As seen in a series of Cabinet Reports on the Coal Commission, March 1925 – July 1926, CAB 24/179
761 Cabinet Conclusions, 7 August 1925, CAB 23/50/24
762 Cabinet Memo by Joynson-Hicks, Arrangements for Dealing with Industrial Emergencies, 6th August 1925, CAB 24/174/89
763 Cabinet Conclusions, 13 August 1925, CAB 23/50/25
764 Home Office Papers, HO/45/12336/2130 and Cabinet Conclusions, 23 October 1925 - CAB 23/51/4
765 Florey, *The General Strike* , p. 111

again the legal limits of any General Strike.[766]

By December, the Hardliners in the Cabinet were making their viewpoint clear to the Prime Minister: there would be no new subsidies for the miners, even if that meant a strike. The stage was set, as noted by one of the few moderates on the General Council, Jimmy Thomas, who admitted to Citrine that he had lost all hope of peace: "They are going to smash it [the strike]. It won't last more than a few days. A few of these people will be shot; of course, more of them will get arrested. They have come to the conclusion that they must fight."[767] With both sides ready for the conflict, the government made the first move – one pushed by the Hardliners – ordering the arrest of key communists, backed and recommended to the Cabinet by Attorney General Douglas Hogg, now seemingly a firm Hardliner.[768] With 5,000 members, the Communist Party certainly had the potential to cause a great deal of trouble, especially with the number of activists and sympathisers that they had managed to place within the trade union movement.[769] J. C. C. Davidson describes just why the Communists frightened the government so much:

> We were at the time particularly worried about the revolutionary activities in this country... The Communist Party in this country was small... but we thought it was gaining in strength and we knew that by consistently taking the lead in industrial disputes, it could gain a secure hold on certain parts of the trade union movement. We were particularly worried by the strength of the minority movement in the mining industry and by the attempts to organise the unemployed. Committees of Action had been set up in many factories and trade unions, factory newspapers were used to influence workers, and demands were made for more nationalisation and increased unemployment pay. MacDonald's failure to act, and the mounting unemployment figures while the Labour Party had been in office, made for a growing disillusion in the labour movement that was dangerous...[770]

The battle to have arrests agreed by the Prime Minister and moderates had been a long one for Hogg and Churchill. As of April 1925, MI5 had been in possession of documents suggesting that the Communist Party

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766 Cabinet Memo, Attorney General, Douglas Hogg, Present Law in regard to Sedition and Strikes, 9 October 1925, CAB 24/175/20
767 Cited in Citrine, *Men and Work*, p. 157
768 Cabinet Conclusions, 13 October 1925, CAB 23/51/2
769 J. Klugmam, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain: The General Strike, 1925-6*, London, 1969, p. 193
770 Rhodes (ed.), J.*CC Davidson - Memoirs of a Conservative*, pp. 227-8

was being funded by Moscow, but for Baldwin this was not enough. Only in late 1925 with more evidence coming to light had Hogg felt emboldened enough to bring it to the Cabinet in early October, gaining clearance for such an operation in the discussion on the 13th. Even MI5 took these notes with a large pinch of salt but, under intense political pressure from some in the Cabinet, it was forced to act, especially with rumours throughout the press starting to create panic in the population. The *Daily Mail* warned of large-scale mutiny in the army, stating that "Socialism, Communism and trade unionism appear to be inseparable".[771] As a result, a raid on the offices of the Communist Party of Great Britain was agreed in Cabinet and ordered by the Home Secretary. The next day, police raids occurred across the country and 12 leading communists were arrested and charged under the Incitement to Mutiny Act of 1797. While other Communist members were forced into hiding, Harry Pollitt and the eleven others arrested were sentenced to six to twelve months' imprisonment.[772]

In the aftermath of the arrests, the Cabinet were informed by Joynson-Hicks that further documents had been discovered, laying out plans for revolution and clearly stating that, should a General Strike be called, it should be turned into civil war and a fight for power with revolutionary demands. The Hardliners had won a major victory and the delighted Home Secretary had also been able to prove that they were justified in their approach.[773] The issue was to raise its head once more that year with Joynson-Hicks informing the Cabinet in December that the Labour Party had asked for the arrested men to be placed in the First Division of Convict (recognised as political prisoners); he also announced that he wished to refuse unless instructed otherwise; the Cabinet agreed. Birkenhead now emerged from his silence, writing to the Marquess of Reading on the legal status of trade unions that, "In my judgement we shall have to set our teeth... and carry the matter once and for all to a conclusion which will involve a complete reconsideration of the exceptional legal status conceded to the Trade Unions, and which they seem to me, under the influence of extremist elements."[774]

Seemingly, Baldwin was aware that his Home Secretary and the Hardliners looked to be making decisions

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771 *Daily Mail*, 23 September, 1925; Perkins, *A Very British Strike*, p. 58; Morris, *The General Strike*, p 162

772 Cabinet Conclusions, 23 October 1925, CAB 23/51/4; Perkins, A Very British Strike, p. 72

773 Cabinet Conclusions, 18 November 1925, CAB 23/51/7

774 The British Library The India Office, Papers of 1st Earl of Birkenhead as Secretary of State for India 1924-28 F.E to Reading, 8 Oct 1925, Mss Eur D703

without his knowledge when it came to the threat of Bolshevism and yet remained quiet.[775] The Cabinet's Hardliners had won a victory over the moderates, and in so doing, had both ensured that leading Communists could not influence any General Strike. The stakes had also been upped, whether politically motivated, based on fear of what these men could achieve, or merely as a show of force, and the arrests showed just how strong a reaction many in the government wanted to unleash upon the unions should such a battle be joined.

1926: The beginning of the end

By February 1926, the Hardliners felt that they were now ready and could win a fight with the unions, even if it were to become a General Strike, with Jix reporting to his colleagues that "little remained to be done before the actual occurrence of an emergency."[776] Despite the loss of Curzon, who had died in late 1925, the Hardliners were seemingly in the ascendency within the Cabinet, or they were operating with some impunity, as by February they had already begun the silent movement of troops and equipment into bases and areas that would most likely be hit hard by any upcoming strike.[777] For the moderates and the Prime Minister, hopes were pinned on the publishing of the Samuel Report and their hopes that the measures recommended would be the basis on which a long-lasting compromise between miners, mine owners, government and unions could be established.

In March 1926, the Samuel Report was published. It included provisions such as state ownership of mine royalties, the amalgamation of small mines and the introduction of family allowances and profit-sharing schemes.[778] Both the government and mine owners agreed in principle with a number of the findings, but for the unions, it was still far from satisfactory, with a number of key aims unmet. On the 15th of April, the miners had made their final demands clear, sending Baldwin a letter demanding an agreement on wages and hours. Cook followed up with a public statement, which laid out how much damage a General Strike could do. It was a speech that made very clear that this was to be a battle for the future of the nation:

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775 Cabinet Conclusions, 16 December 1925, CAB 23/51/13

776 Cabinet Memo by Joynson-Hicks, Supply and Transport Organisation, 22 February 1926, CAB 24/178/82

777 The War Office Archives, Office of the Commander in Chief and War Office: Distribution of the Army, 1st January - 30 June 1926, WO 73/123

778 The National Archives, National Coal Board, The Samuel Report 1926, COAL 12/150

> The government and the owners knew they had got the organisation that could fight and win. My last word to the government is 'count the cost. The cost of a strike of the miners would mean the end of capitalism.' Let me warn the government that there is a new mentality in the police, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. Ninety-seven per cent of recruits for the past two years have come from the working classes, and thousands of them miners, who will not shoot against their kith and kin, when the order comes, and we shall not be afraid to advise them. This is a war to the death, and it is your death they are after.[779]

Concerned by the aggressive rhetoric from the miners, Baldwin attempted to negotiate with them and the mine owners over the report, with talks on-going throughout April 1926 – a policy which was supported by Amery and even Birkenhead. But, as it became clear that both sides were far from a deal, Hardliners like Joynson-Hicks and Churchill claimed that only tough action against the miners would now force an acceptable compromise. As Thomas Jones, Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, made clear in his diary, the sympathy of many in Cabinet was with the owners, and the Hardliners were adamant that there was to be a strike:

> It is possible not to feel the contrast between the reception which ministers give to a body of owners and a body of miners. Ministers are at ease at once with the former, they are friends jointly exploring a situation. There was hardly any indication of opposition or censure. It was rather a joint discussion of whether it was better to precipitate a strike or the unemployment which would result from continuing the present terms. The majority clearly wanted a strike.[780]

With the unions continuing to reject terms, Baldwin found himself increasingly isolated, with Birkenhead soon joining the Hardliners, and a further bitter blow with Neville Chamberlain's announcement that he too now saw no hope for negotiation.[781] The Samuel Report was discussed over March, but for the Hardliners and their allies, the argument was clear: if the miners would not compromise and agree to the report, then the

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779 The Morning Post, 13 March 1926 reporting A.J Cook Speech 12th March 1926
780 Jones, *Whitehall Diaries: Vol* II, p. 16
781 Florey, *The General Strike of 1926*, p.113

government had to stand its ground.[782] This view was again raised in the final discussion on the matter in late March, in which the decision was made to support the report and make that clear to the miners.[783] This argument was strengthened by the fact that they knew that the government was now fully prepared for the crisis after months of work by the Home Secretary. Work that was still ongoing, including a Public Order Committee Report discussed which called for a strengthening of the Sedition Law and a discussion on further legal powers that could be enacted that month.[784] By this point, Cabinet members W. Bridgeman (First Lord of the Admiralty) and Sir Douglas Hogg (Attorney General) had also joined the Hardliners. Baldwin, with only the Minister for Labour, Steel-Maitland, still staunchly in his camp, had been outmanoeuvred.

On the 14th of April, the Cabinet met to discuss the situation again, making it clear that they believed the refusal of the miners to negotiate meaningfully on pay and hours left no room for compromise.[785] The moderates were seemingly powerless in the face of those clamouring for action, especially with Baldwin now remaining largely silent. More militant policy was being enacted; for example, it was agreed on the 27th of April in the Supply and Transport Committee that more troops should be moved to South Wales, Scotland and Lancashire – something Baldwin was informed of via letter.[786] However, despite a strike looking almost inevitable, Baldwin continued throughout April to meet with both the miners and mine owners, discussing his initial progress with Cabinet on the 15th of April.[787] The positivity of the moderates that Baldwin could persevere was dashed on the 28th when Baldwin announced to Cabinet that the miners still refused to make any significant change in stance but that he was making a last appeal and would report to Cabinet within a number of days.[788] Two days later, on the 30th of April, Baldwin announced that his and the mine owners' last offer had been officially rejected by the miners. It was agreed that a government reply would be sent making it clear that the miners' rejection of terms meant that no more progress would be made on negotiations – something surely pushed by the Hardliners. Baldwin did, however, manage to get Cabinet to agree to one

782 Cabinet Conclusions, 10 March 1926, CAB 23/52/10 and 22 March, Cab 23/52/12
783 Cabinet Conclusions, 24 March 1926, CAB 23/52/13
784 Memo on Public Order Committee Report, 25 March 1926 - CAB 24/179/36
785 Cabinet Conclusions, 14 April 1926, CAB 23/52/15
786 The Baldwin Papers, Meeting of the Supply and Transport Committee Memo, 27th April 1926, Volume 22 D.3.4 - General Strike 1926 Documents
787 Cabinet Conclusions, 15 April 1926, CAB 23/52/16
788 Cabinet Conclusions, 28 April 1926, CAB 23/52/19

more meeting with the miners, but he would be joined by Birkenhead and N Chamberlain and Steel-Maitland. Joynson-Hicks was also victorious in his push to ensure that more could be done by the Supply and Transport Organisation to prepare for a strike.[789]

As May Day arrived, the streets were filled with both Fascists and Communists showing solidarity with their chosen sides, while the population waited nervously for the conflict, with many fearing it could lead to class war, revolution and Bolshevism. The papers, too, were now sure that battle would erupt soon. *The Times* declared that: "Warships at Malta and elsewhere would be recalled".[790] The danger of losing control was by now a deep concern, so much so that even the unions were becoming worried about the actions of the Bolshevik-inspired hard left. After the strike, the Labour MP and trade union leader J. H. Thomas stated that: "What I dreaded about this strike more than anything else was this, if by chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control."[791] On the morning of the 2nd of May, the nation awoke to the news that negotiations were failing and that a strike would soon be called. *Daily Mail* editor Thomas Marlowe wrote a piece that summed up the paper's take on the coming clash: "A General Strike is not an industrial dispute. It is a revolutionary movement intended to inflict suffering upon the great mass of innocent persons in the community and thereby to put forcible constraint upon the government."[792] Little did he know it yet, but Marlowe would have a huge personal impact on the next 24 hours. In Westminster, headlines such as this were greeted with satisfaction by Churchill and his camp.

Baldwin, however, had still not given up, calling in the miners' representatives for a last round of talks, meeting them after Cabinet on the 30th and corresponding in letters the following day. He reported back to Cabinet on the 2nd of May, reporting that talks had broken down due to the miners again refusing any compromise (despite efforts from the TUC to broker one). Birkenhead, at this point, was still vaguely supportive of Baldwin, announcing to the Cabinet that his efforts for compromise were worth continuing, but the records show that the general discussion in the Cabinet was still largely supportive of sticking to the

789 Cabinet Conclusions, 30 April 1926, CAB 23/52/20
790 *The Sunday Times*, 2 May, 1926
791 House of Commons Debate, 13 May 1926, Vol 195, cols 1042-59
792 *The Daily Mail*, 2 May, 1926

Samuel Report as a take it or leave it offer.[793] The Cabinet was adjourned but met again at 6.45pm; here the moderates gained more time with the agreement that negotiations would continue into the night, while the Hardliners may have been satisfied with the green light given to Jix to send telegrams to the Emergency Supply Organisation to announce that a General Strike was now imminent.[794] Chamberlain recorded that the Cabinet had clearly already begun to split, "so at the moment it looks to me like a fight".[795] He also noted that Churchill "was getting frantic with excitement and eagerness to begin the battle."[796] Later stating in a letter that, "warm words" passed between F. E. and Churchill, and that they were "impatient to stop talking and get to war."[797]

Then a long wait, as Amery records: "we kicked our heels for hours."[798] At 11.15pm, they met again and here the Cabinet seemed split on what to do, with the TUC seemingly willing to again try and broker a deal. Even Churchill remained quiet regarding the proposal of further extended negotiations. Baldwin called for a form of compromise. Jix, Churchill and Hogg complained bitterly about this weakened position. Baldwin was strongly backed by Birkenhead and Amery that any other form of deal would lead the TUC to break all talks and begin a strike immediately.[799] However, while in discussion, the Cabinet received an urgent message from Thomas Marlowe, editor at the *Daily Mail*. He stated that the printers were refusing to print government anti-strike articles – a sign for the Hardliners that the conflict had started. Churchill, Chamberlain, Balfour, Bridgeman and Sir Douglas Hogg all declared to Baldwin that the strike had begun.[800] A letter was prepared and agreed upon that left little doubt as to the position of the Cabinet – that the Samuel Report must be accepted by the miners, the *Daily Mail* strike condemned and that the instructions issued for a General Strike if no compromise was met must be withdrawn. All knew that neither would be accepted by the miners and even to Baldwin it was clear that no new paths for negotiation remained open:

> No solution of the difficulties in the coal industry which is both practical and honourable to those

793 Cabinet Conclusions, 2 May 1926, CAB 23/52/21
794 Cabinet Conclusions, 2 May 1926, CAB 23/52/22
795 N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C to A.V.C, 1 May (continued 2nd May) 1926, NC 1/26/361
796 N. Chamberlain Papers, N.C to A.V.C, 1 May (continued 2nd May) 1926, NC 1/26/361
797 Robert Self (ed.), *Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, vol* II, May 1926, p. 346
798 Cabinet Conclusions, 2 May 1926, Cab23/52
799 Birmingham Library, N.C Diary, 3 of May, NC 2/22
800 Rhodes, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 235 and Cabinet Conclusions, 2 May 1926, CAB 23/52/23

> concerned can be reached except by sincere acceptance of the report of the commission… It has come to the knowledge of government not only that specific instructions have been sent directing their [TUC] members in several of the most vital industries and services of the country to carry out a General Strike… but also that overt acts have already taken place, including gross interference with the freedom of the press… His Majesty's Government, therefore before it can continue negotiations, must require from the TUC both a repudiation of the actions referred to that have already taken place and an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the instructions for a general strike.[801]

It was a letter that left both Baldwin and the miners powerless to continue negotiating. Such was the extent of the feeling in Cabinet that later rumours persisted that *en masse* Cabinet resignations had been threatened had the Prime Minister not acted on their pleas. There remains some uncertainty behind this intervention by Marlowe: some believe that it was orchestrated by Churchill and Marlowe to push Baldwin away from negotiations; others state that it was merely a sideshow, distracting from Baldwin's real reason for his climb-down – to ensure that he, and not a hawk, would be in charge of the government during the strike.[802] Either way, two things are clear: at around 1am, soon after the call and the Cabinet's reaction to it, Baldwin met with the union leaders and told them that, due to such action, the negotiations must now cease; secondly, despite the phone call, the *Daily Mail* did publish on time the next morning with a headline declaring war on the strikers. The General Strike had now begun – the question being asked by many in the Tory Party now was if a far-left revolution would follow.

The General Strike, May 3 – 12: Unrest, revolution and a divided Cabinet

"It continued for ten days, it divided the people into two camps, it threatened the survival of parliamentary government, and it brought the country nearer to revolution than it has ever been."[803]

On a sunny 3rd of May, Great Britain woke up to a state of emergency. The nation was at a standstill. Together with 1,000,000 miners, the railwaymen, dockers, printing workers, iron and steel plants, chemical

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801 Appendix, Cabinet Conclusions, 2 May 1926, CAB 23/52/22

802 Morris, *The General Strike*, p 228; Rhodes, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 243; Renshaw, *The General Strike*, p. 169

803 Duff Cooper, *Old Men Forget*, London, 2011, p. 26

industries and power plant unions had also joined the stoppage: more than 3,000,000 men were now officially on strike.[804] Both sides knew what was at stake, but both also knew that, should they lose control, the risk of extremists seizing the opportunity for revolution was very real. Baldwin told colleagues that bloodshed and violence would be rife should the strike last any longer than a week; indeed, Baldwin believed that the nation was nearer civil war than it had been for hundreds of years.[805] As the Prime Minister watched his years of attempted compromise with the unions turn to ashes, he declared in his address to the Commons that "everything I care for most is being smashed to bits".[806] He told Amery that "this is the end".[807] Baldwin was to receive reports daily for the duration, undoubtedly greatly adding to his despair as events escalated.[808] Neville Chamberlain too was a close ally, stating to his brother that when it came to the strike "the Prime Minister does keep in close touch with me."[809] Churchill now spoke up, stating that if the strike succeeded, "it would mean that a militant minority were starving the majority into submission to their will and would be the end of democracy, industrial as well as political."[810] Even MacDonald was fearful, telling friends: "I can understand a conscious revolutionary but [not] those who run a policy which can only result in revolution at the same time they have condemned revolutionary methods."[811]

For those watching events from outside the political sphere, the threat of violence and mass unrest was also weighing heavily. Novelist Arnold Bennett wrote in his diary: "most people gloomy, but all uncompromising. General opinion that the fight would be short and violent. Bloodshed anticipated next week."[812] With this threat clear in their minds, the strike was the only thing discussed in Cabinet for the nine days of its duration, meeting in total seven times, with the splits between the moderates and the Hardliners dominating the discussions from the very start. Though all agreed that the government's two clear priorities were maintaining food supplies and keeping order, it was precisely how this was to be achieved that caused friction. Even in America, the risk that Britain faced was regarded with concern, as the *Evening World* stated: "The Baldwin ministry has failed to bring about a settlement, and seemingly has taken its stand with the

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804 Renshaw, *The General Strike*, p. 169
805 House of Commons Debate, 3 May 1926, Vol 195, cols 57-80
806 House of Commons Debate, 3 May 1926, Vol 195, cols 57-80
807 *Amery Diaries*, II, pp. 483-4
808 The Baldwin Papers, Central Council of Economic Leagues Strike Bulletins, 4-11 May 1926, Volume 22 D.3.4 - General Strike 1926 Documents
809 N Chamberlain Archives, N.C to A..C, 3 May 1926, NC 1/26/362
810 House of Commons Debate, 3 May 1926, Vol 195, cols 80-172
811 MacDonald Papers, JRM to Walter Newbold, 13 May 1925, RMP, PRO, 30/69/1990
812 Arnold Bennett, *The Journal of Arnold Bennett, 1896-1928*, London, 1933, p.42

mine owners. This sinister feature of the settlement is the fact that it means the beginning of a bitter class struggle. It has been the genius of the English, throughout their history, to find a way. This time they have failed."[813] They had not totally stopped trying, however, and a small meeting took place on the 3rd between Chamberlain, Churchill, Baldwin, Steel-Maitland, MacDonald and Henderson to seek compromise. However, Churchill was so violent in his answers that the Labour leaders took offence and no progress was made.[814] On the Monday, with the strike in force, Chamberlain wrote to his wife in France. He expressed that he was on the side of Baldwin and the moderates, noting that the government must stay calm and manage the situation: "I am in favour of sitting tight for the present."[815]

The government was prepared and acted quickly: emergency powers were enacted by the end of the first day. That morning, the London Docks were occupied by armed troops and armoured cars to ensure that volunteers could work effectively; Hyde Park became a troop depot, and the Home Office took full control of law and order.[816] The country was, as planned, split into manageable sectors, each under the control of a Civil Commissioner appointed by government from its Junior Ministers and headed by the Chief Civil Commissioner Sir William Mitchell-Thompson, the Post Master General. They could exercise the full power of the government and were to be in control of maintaining supply routes, organising the local police and other important functions. Largely middle-class volunteers manned trains and buses, and worked in a variety of roles that had been vacated by strikers. It was, as A. J. P. Taylor later wrote, "a class war in polite form."[817]

However there was violence too in Glasgow, Liverpool, London and other major cities on strike, adding to the tension in the first Cabinet meeting on the 5th of May. Initially the moderates, led by Neville Chamberlain, but also consisting of Baldwin, Steel-Maitland, and Amery, were able to push through relief measures for the families of strikers, despite some opposition, but soon the discussion moved on to the use of force to ensure that food supplies were protected. For Churchill and his allies, Jix, Worthington-Evans, Hogg and Birkenhead, the best way to ensure victory was through draconian measures from the outset, arguing for a show of strength by recruiting "young and vigorous men" to act as Special Constables during the strike –

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813 Cited in the Yorkshire Post May 4th 1926, Florey, The General Strike of 1926, p. 139
814 N. Chamberlain Archives, N.C Diary entry 3rd May (written next day), NC 2/22
815 N. Chamberlain Archives, N.C to A.V.C, 3 May 1926, NC 1/26/362
816 Florey, *The General Strike of 1926*, p. 138; Renshaw, The General Strike, p. 184
817 A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, Oxford, 1965, p. 245

something that, with the support of Worthington-Evans and Jix, he was to get. The Home Secretary and Attorney General also pushed for and won a debate to ensure that seditious newspapers could be closed for the strike. An interesting aside from the meeting is also worth noting: racing was seen as a risk and was shut down for the duration of the strike; cricket was not.[818] The moderates led by Baldwin had been notably quiet, and remained so when Churchill later pushed for the use of troops with tanks to protect food and supplies moving through big cities.[819] Birkenhead was delighted that the battle had come, later stating that "the General Strike was inevitable; and if it was to come, it could not have been faced at a better moment or in a better cause."[820]

Despite the calm in Cabinet on the 5th of May, Churchill had continued to agitate inside and outside of Cabinet since the onset of the strike, becoming more and more militant, even to the point of questioning his close ally Birkenhead's commitment to the fight.[821] One colleague stated that he now saw every unemployed man as a Bolshevik and that the nation was facing an international Bolshevik attack.[822] He would tell Thomas Jones repeatedly that it was a conflict: "We are at war, and we must go through with it. We must have the nerve… Either the country will break the General Strike or the General Strike will break the country."[823] Not all were paying attention though, as on the same day Neville Chamberlain in his role as liaison between National and Local Government made moves to ensure that the families of the men on strike still received fair subsidies, matching those of the unemployed.[824]

The Chancellor had also stirred up the backbenchers with a number of angry speeches in the Commons, one of which claimed that the strike's aim was to establish some form of Communism, saying that it "would inevitably lead to the erection of some Soviet Trade Unions."[825] Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the levels of support for action, Baldwin was again forced to back down, and on the same day Joynson-Hicks gained approval to use the emergency powers to their fullest, offering the power to arrest without warrant and to

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818 Cabinet Conclusions, 5 May 1926, CAB 23/52/24
819 Cabinet Minutes, Daily Strike Bulletins 1-8, 1926, CAB 27/331
820 Birkenhead, *Last Essays*, London, 1930, p. 173
821 Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diaries*, II, p. 28
822 *Davidson Memoirs*, p. 242
823 Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, p. 36,41 and 44
824 Cabinet Conclusions, 5 May 1926, CAB 23/52
825 House of Commons Debate, 3 May 1926, Vol 195, cols 80-172

seize buildings as needed. On the 6th of May, an address from Baldwin was printed in *The Gazette:*

> Constitutional Government is being attacked. Let all good citizens whose livelihood and labour have been put in peril bear with fortitude and patience the hardships with which they have been so suddenly confronted... The laws of England are the peoples' birth right. Those laws are in your keeping. You have made Parliament their guardian. The General Strike is a challenge to Parliament, and is the road to anarchy and ruin.[826]

That same day, Baldwin also had a major victory, though one many wouldn't recognise until after the strike. Baldwin, who was all too aware of the pressures Churchill would continue to put on his less enthusiastic colleagues, acted quickly to try and nullify the threat by putting Churchill in charge of the *British Gazette* (a government-run paper for the duration of the Strike).[827] He told Davidson, "it will keep him busy, stop him doing worse things."[828] Published from the 5th of May until the end of the strike, its aim was to inform the nation while other newspapers were hit by printers' strikes, and at its peak had two and half million readers.[829] It was a risky move: it kept Churchill away from the government's operations, ended his ability to influence military decisions, control the police and volunteer forces or travel the country where he could not be controlled but the draw back was that it did allow the Chancellor to spread his message of violence and alarm across the country through the paper. For Churchill, it was a chance to intimidate the strikers: indeed, articles dictated by him often had to be edited due to his inflammatory language.[830] Examples of this venom though, were still seen almost daily in the publication, and Baldwin began to fear that they would only lead to more unrest. On the 6th of May, the paper described the strike as a "Concerted, Deliberate, and Organized Menace."[831]

Meanwhile, the Supply and Transport Committee, chaired by Joynson-Hicks, quickly began its work in handling all daily decisions. Churchill, Chamberlain and Birkenhead all also attended regularly. The Home

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826 *British Gazette*, 6 May, 1926
827 Morris, *The General Strike*, p 247
828 Davidson, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p 238
829 British Gazette, 13 May 1926 and HC Deb, 07 July 1926, vol 197, cc2087-169
830 Pelling, *Winston Churchill*, p. 313
831 *British Gazette*, 6 May, 1926

Secretary's first move to call for volunteers was met with enthusiasm across the country, and 30,000 came forward on the 3rd of May alone. In fact, the government soon realised that it actually had too many men at its disposal; by the end of the strike, between 300,000 and 500,000 had signed up, with most areas having around 20,000 men it did not need. In the London area, for example, over 100,000 came forward and just 20,000 were found work to do.[832] One reason for this, and perhaps a key factor in the government's success throughout the strike, was that staff at the major haulage companies had not joined the miners on the picket lines. Throughout the strike, they operated at near full capacity and ensured that food supplies could be delivered across the country.[833]

However, this was not yet clear when the Cabinet met on the morning of the 7th of May. Here the Home Secretary was successful in his request for more Special Constables to be signed up, bringing the number to a total of 50,000. The Hardliners now called for the use of the military to crush the strike, but Baldwin remained adamant, enforcing on the Cabinet his opposition to the use of excessive force and, with the strike only just begun, he still carried most of the Cabinet with him. Despite pressure from Jix, Churchill and Birkenhead, Baldwin kept to his principles over the military, making it clear that they were only to be used as a last line of defence and that they should not be armed with live ammunition unless the crisis escalated to danger levels. The Secretary of State for War Worthington-Evans was, however, successful in ensuring that tear gas could be used by soldiers if needed as an alternative to live ammunition.[834] However, Special Constables and troops had already been posted in all port areas, and though Baldwin had made clear that troops were to be kept back as a last resort, Churchill was successful in ensuring that officers knew that, in the case of real and prolonged disturbance, rifles could be used.[835] Baldwin also watered down plans for the deployment of the Territorial Army, ensuring that instead of parading fully equipped for combat, it should join local Civil Constabulary Reserve forces wearing civilian clothes and armed only with truncheons.[836] Baldwin had described the strike at its start as “a challenge to Parliament and the road to anarchy and ruin”, yet he remained calm, focusing instead on peaceful resolution.[837]

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832 Cabinet Minutes, Daily Strike Bulletins 1-8, 1926, CAB 27/331
833 Laybourn, *The General Strike of 1926*, p. 55
834 Cabinet Conclusions, 7 May 1926, CAB 23/25/26
835 Pelling, *Winston Churchill*, p. 314
836 Cabinet Conclusions, 7 May 1926, CAB 23/52/26
837 *British Gazette*, 5 May, 1926

Another clash erupted the same day – one that would last until long after the strike finished. On the afternoon of the 7th of May, a proposed Bill to make the General Strike illegal had been brought in front of the Cabinet and, though a number objected, the vote was carried.[838] On his own steam, Churchill had even tried to get the Bank of England to withdraw union funding before the bill was debated – something that was refused.[839] With his back against the wall, Baldwin sought help in the Lords and with the backing of Lord Salisbury, the leader of the Conservatives in the Lords (and Lord Privy Seal), he reaffirmed his opposition to any such move. Even Neville was in favour of some limited legislation to ensure that such strikes were more difficult in the future. He supported a bill making a secret ballot obligatory before a strike for union members and to remove the immunity of union funds in any strike.[840] His reasoning was that any long war of attrition between unions and government would be a negative for the nation and for the honest working men within it.[841]

On the 7th of May, the Bill in question, brought in by Douglas Hogg, Attorney General, was supported with a majority in the Cabinet. To Baldwin's relief, the King, too, waded in, advising that it would be: “A grave mistake to do anything which might be interpreted as confiscation, or to provoke the strikers, who up until now have been remarkably quiet... [As] anything done to touch the pockets of those who are now only existing on strike pay might cause exasperation and serious reprisals on the part of the sufferers.”[842] In the Cabinet, it was decided that any such measures should be delayed until looked at by committee. The moderates had just held the tide but it would continue to be raised and debated at Cabinet for the duration of the Strike. The Hardliners were also seeking other tough new legislation, with the Cabinet meeting on the 8th of May seeing proposals for a ban on all Russian money transfers for the duration of the strike, and a draft copy of what would soon be known as the Illegal Strikes Bill, outlawing secondary strikes, fiercely debated. The same meeting also saw a passionate intervention by Arthur Steel-Maitland, arguing that no discussion should be held with the strikers until the strike was formally abandoned.[843]

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838 Cabinet Conclusions, 7 May 1926, CAB 23/52/26
839 T. Jones, *Whitehall Diary*,, p. 46
840 Cabinet Conclusions, 2 May, CAB 23/52/26
841 N Chamberlain Archive, N.C to A.V.C, 7 May 1926, NC 1/26/364
842 Cited in H. Nicolson, *King George V*, London, 1952, pp. 540-41
843 Cabinet Conclusions on the Strike, 8 May 1926 - CAB 23/52/27

On the 7th of May, *The Gazette* published Churchill's now infamous announcement that the military would not be charged for any action taken against the strikers, infuriating Cabinet colleagues. N Chamberlain writing the next day to his wife stated, "Some of us are going to make a concerted attack on Winston. He simply revels in this affair, which he will continuously talk of and treat as if it were 1914."[844] But it was not just the inflammatory language that angered many on the pickets – it was the casual references to class war and the propagating of the government's role that also caused resentment. Reading the report on the 8th of May, which described the events of the previous day, it is not hard to understand why:

> A long line of motor lorries... bore witness to the fact that the strikers had suffered early defeat in their attempt to starve London... The convoy looked like the commissariat of a victorious army, and the illusion was heightened by the sight of soldiers perched high on their loads, some of them smoking, most of them smiling, and all of them going about their job with the casual good humour characteristic of the British private in peace and war... (The) troops had descended on their objective before the enemy had time to realize they were there.[845]

But it was not all smiles: the violence in Hull, Glasgow and Liverpool was discussed in the Cabinet and the Hardliners continued to find success in their arguments for a show of strength.[846] Baldwin addressed the nation that same day, announcing that the government would not be seeking negotiation: "I am a man of peace. I am longing and working and praying for peace. But I will not surrender the safety and security of the British Constitution."[847] The same day, the first armed convoy supported lorries taking food supplies from the London Docks, supported by the 1st Battalion of the Grenadier Guards and 20 armoured cars. Illustrating the class divide, the volunteers were described as young men wearing the sweaters and scarves of well-known schools.[848] Reports from the time describe the atmosphere of violence that now seemed to grow every day: "the sullen mass of strikers who congregated after dawn were awed by the military, and permitted most of the moving on to be done by the mounted police, unarmed as always, but backed this time by enough

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844 N. Chamberlain Archive, N.C to A.V.C, 9 May 1926, NC 1/26/365
845 *The British Gazette*, 8 May, 1926
846 Cabinet Minutes, Supply and Transport Committee, 8 May 1926, CAB 27/260
847 Speech on BBC radio on the General Strike (8 May 1926), as quoted in Keith Middlemas, 'Baldwin: A Biography' London, 1969, p. 415
848 *The British Gazette*, 12 May, 1926

artillery to kill every living thing in every street in the neighbourhood of the mills."[849] An American journalist also described the scene:

> Long files of armoured cars choked the country roads in Surrey. Troops continue to pour into town. The ordinary barracks and different quarters of the city are gorged with soldiers in service uniforms. Thousands of Marines are packed into the Duke of York Barracks. Sentries guarding Royal residences have exchanged their usual ceremonial dress for khaki and carry 150 rounds of ammunition in their packs.[850]

The show of force, however, was to have the opposite result that Churchill had hoped, and as word spread, violence escalated, especially in the North and the Midlands where police charges led to many arrests.[851]

It was this, alongside the calls for military action printed in *The Gazette*, that helped harden the views of many on the pickets, putting the nation at greater risk of true class war. For the moderates remaining in government, the concern was not limited to the stories being published; Churchill's meddling was damaging the government's response on a much baser level, with his hands-on approach often proving counter-productive to publication. As one *Gazette* worker described in a letter of complaint to the Prime Minister:

> The failure to some extent in the details of distraction of the British *Gazette* has been due entirely to the fact that the Chancellor occupied the attention of practically the whole staff who normally would have been thinking about the details… So long as he does not come to the offices tonight the staff will be able to do what it is they are there to do... He thinks he is Napoleon, but curiously enough the men who have been printing all their life happen to know more about their job than he does.[852] [Though Churchill's own view of his time at the Gazette was one of great satisfaction, even keeping a photograph of himself alongside all the papers staff among his personal

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849 Cited in Symons, *The General Strike*, p. 184

850 *New York Times*, 9 May 1926

851 Symons, *The General Strike*, p. 188

852 Letter to Prime Minister from British Gazette Worker (unknown), Baldwin Archives, Volume 22 D.3.4 - General Strike 1926 Documents

papers.][853]

At this point of the strike, a remarkable change in the balance of power also occurred, with the key Hardliner Jix seemingly realising that heavy-handed action would only prolong the strike, and moving towards the Prime Minister's side of the Cabinet debates. As Davidson recounts, Joynson-Hicks, "handled the Committee [Supply and Transport] with supreme skill: was most business-like and refused to be rattled."[854] The Hardliners had been blocked by one of their own but the Home Secretary was to be tested as events continued to escalate. As Neville Chamberlain noted, "I must add Jix has come out unexpectedly well. I have remarked before that he is always much more cautious in action than in speech and during this crisis he has kept his head and refused to be rushed into foolish and precipitate deeds by Winston."[855]

By the 9th of May, the police were also forced into baton charges in a dozen areas of London alone. As one report, from a non-striking bus driver, delivered to Baldwin shows, the violence was affecting the great majority of ordinary people in London – especially those still using the remaining public transport:

> Our routes are various... two of our buses were very badly smashed, in one instance I had a full complement of passengers who were most brave. I issued an order for the women passengers to put up their umbrellas which they did and so saved glass hitting their eyes, but I must say seeing the people sitting on the floor of the bus holding up umbrellas and traveling at about 30 miles per hour was most comical!! I shall certainly be glad to return to the city, facing some of these rough mobs is not exactly a pleasant job. I find the women very bad in parts of London, the language is simply awful and my raincoat is well stained with spittle. I shall report for duty again as soon as possible.[856]

Shots were fired at trains in Crewe by strikers and the Flying Scotsman was derailed. In Preston, 5,000 strikers tried to storm a police station and were beaten back. The capital did not escape either:

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853 The Churchill Archives, Photograph of a luncheon party attended by those involved in the publication of the British Gazette, Dated only as 1926, CHAR 2/148/2

854 Rhodes, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 243

855 N Chamberlain Archive, N.C to A.V.C, 9 May 1926, NC 1/26/365

856 The Baldwin Papers, Letter to Mr Charles Dance by E L Admies, bus conductor of the 558 – passed to the Prime Minister, 9 May 1926, Volume 22 D.3.4 - General Strike 1926 Documents

> At the end of the first week of the strike a ripple of violence had spread through South London... At Deptford Broadway... a recent meeting had ended in a riot between strikers and police; bottles had been thrown and mounted police unseated and mauled. Men had been injured on both sides and tempers made permanently ugly.[857]

On the 10th of May, troops were out in force to protect convoys; baton charges occurred at Newcastle and a number of smaller incidents happened across the North, notably in the towns of Northumberland and in Durham.[858] In some areas, such as Fife, the strikers created their own 'defence corps': in Methil a corps of 150 of these men was increased to 700, who were drilled and armed with sticks and batons. Abe Moffat stated that "when the authorities were met with this organised and well-disciplined body of men […] they always considered it best not to do anything foolish."[859] In response, more men joined the government forces. In one case, a Master of Foxhounds had offered all of his hunt's horses, while soon cavalry troops joined, made up of ex-cavalry and artillery officers. As *The Times* later recorded, they came dressed in Khaki, trench coats, riding breeches and boots, and armed with a long baton.[860] It seemed that with escalation on both sides, the Hardliners were taking the ascendency and as the moderates lost control, the risk of real unrest became more real.

The debate reignited in Cabinet on the 10th of May after increased violence in Glasgow had led to a call for 50,000 more special constables in the area, and in Hull a Royal Navy ship had been forced to land troops to quell unrest. Liverpool and Ipswich had also seen violence throughout the night. Addressing the Cabinet, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury told them that the country was closer to civil war then it had been for centuries.[861] The debate over what action to take became a heated one, and focused on whether the unions should now be engaged in dialogue and negotiation, or if more direct action was needed. Neville Chamberlain, who had joined the Hardliners, much to Baldwin's dismay, claimed that, "the best and kindest thing is to strike quickly and hard". Churchill and Birkenhead agreed. Despite Labour's Arthur Henderson

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857 Cited in Renshaw, *The General Strike*, p.18
858 A. Mason, *The General Strike in the North East*, Hull, 1970, op. Cit., pp. 66-8
859 Abe Moffat, *My Life with the Miners*, London, 1965, p. 47
860 *The Times*, 21 May 1926
861 Cabinet Conclusions, 10 May 1926, CAB 23/52/28

trying to help bridge talks, Churchill refused out of hand to negotiate. Supported by vocal MPs such as Duff Cooper, he had the power base behind him to stop the Prime Minister in his tracks.[862] Firmly with the Prime Minister remained Amery and Steel-Maitland. Others in the party were also refusing to assume the worst of the strikers. Solicitor General Sir Thomas Inskip wrote as much to Lord Irwin in 1926: "The great mass of working people have behaved quite admirably. I really feel it has been worth having a General Strike to really appreciate what the British nation is."[863] But despite these supporters, Baldwin was up against it, with the Hardliners seemingly taking control of the Cabinet.

As the strike raged, the battle over legislation had also been on-going, with Baldwin now coming under increasing pressure by the Hardliners to legislate the stopping of all funds to the unions as well as making a General Strike illegal. Churchill and Birkenhead took the lead against the Prime Minister, also arguing that such moves backed up with an increase in force would bring the strike to a rapid end – something that Baldwin feared would in reality cause hunger, resentment and more riots.[864] The Hardliners won the clash with Baldwin agreeing to raise the issue in the Commons the following day. Thomas Jones, Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet (a post he held under four Prime Ministers), also asked Baldwin to use his influence to calm the Cabinet and start talks – something to which Churchill took exception: "We are at war. Matters have changed from Sunday morning. We are a long way from our position then (negotiation). We must go through with it. You must have the nerve."[865]

Despite the apparent win for the Hardliners in forcing a debate on legislation, the Cabinet met on the 11th of May to hear Baldwin announce that he would not do so after all. It was a major decision, perhaps helped by the softening of both Jix and Birkenhead towards the moderates over the last days – but it was one that left Churchill furious.[866] For him, the escalating violence and anger was now cause for extreme concern, with real fears regarding the possibility of extremists gaining control of the strike. This was not complete fantasy. The far left had been active, with members agitating across the nation in order to spread the unrest and harness it for their revolutionary cause. Though the Communist Party was taken by surprise at the start of the

862 Symons, *The General Strike*, p. 113; Perkins, A Very British Strike, p. 208
863 Borthwick Institute, University of York, Halifax Papers, Inskip to Irwin, 9 May 1926, Halifax MSS, C152/17/1/28
864 Cabinet Conclusions, 10 May 1926, CAB 23/52/28
865 Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, p. 40
866 Cabinet Conclusion, 11 May 1926, CAB 23/52/29

strike, it quickly regained its composure and prepared for an escalation of events. Instructions for strike tactics and plans came out of its HQ on King Street throughout the nine days, with the emphasis on using existing grievances to push strikers into further violence.[867] The TUC's General Council, too, was facing accusations of Communist links and aims after it was reported that large-scale support and demonstrations for the Strike were occurring in Bolshevik Russia. The All Russian Trade Union Council even offered 2,000,000 roubles in support of the strike, which the General Council felt it had to reject for fear of the backlash it might cause.[868] It was this form of support that led for calls from Conservative backbenchers to end any trade with Russia – something ultimately rejected by Baldwin due to the belief that only the financial advantages of British trade stopped Bolshevik Russia from acting in an even more aggressive manner.[869]

However, it was Baldwin who quickly gained the ascendancy as by that evening, despite the Hardliners and Communists' best attempts, it had become clear to many that the strike was petering out. Within the union leadership, it was now clear that they had failed to win the support of the country; it was the moment that many on the left had feared but, as the moderates began to discuss seeking terms with the government, the threat of more extremist groups refusing to join any such deal remained real. The TUC at the time was beginning to crumble and on the 11th of May, Baldwin agreed to meet a delegation, taking N Chamberlain, Bridgeman, Birkenhead, Worthington-Evans and Steel-Maitland with him.[870] Despite this, Churchill remained on the attack and on the 12th of May, *The Gazette* declared that the strike was a 'Vast Soviet Scheme', going on to state that “Russia has prepared carefully for an English strike for a long while, though the trade union leaders did not know it, for the most part they were playing the game of the Kremlin.”[871] The next 24 hours would prove to all involved that the forces of anarchy and communism had been defeated.

The return of reason

867 Pelling, *The British Communist Party*, p. 36
868 Symons, *The General Strike*, p. 132
869 The Baldwin Papers, Foreign Office report to Prime Minister on Anglo Soviet Relations and the General Strike, 1926, Volume 11 D.3.1 Labour Documents
870 N. Chamberlain Archive, N.C Diary, 11 May 1926, NC2/22
871 *British Gazette*, 12 May, 1926

By the afternoon of the 12th of May, rumours of defeat started swirling around the picket lines; by the early evening, it was confirmed: the unions had surrendered and the strike was over. The TUC, realising that it had lost public support, was low on funds and struggling to keep control of the thousands of strikers, had been forced to sue for peace. Meeting Baldwin that morning, they had agreed to total capitulation; all but the miners took the terms, with the pit-heads in Wales and the North remaining as strike bastions for a number of bitter cold months. Baldwin made the promise that those strikers who returned to work would not be unfairly treated. Such was his determination in this that when later contacted by an aggrieved ex-striker, he took action himself to rectify the situation.[872] But the danger was not yet over as thousands of men remained on the streets and their anger at defeat was whipped up by Communist agitators who cried treachery as the strike came to a close. Their message was clear:

> The decision to call off the General Strike is the greatest crime that has ever been permitted, not only against the miners but against the working class of Great Britain and the whole world. The right wing in the General Council bears direct responsibility for throwing away the workers' weapons and leaving them alone and defenceless.[873]

Baldwin made his own views clear to the House of Commons in the aftermath of the strike:

> The peace that I believe has come—the victory that has been won, is a victory of the common sense, not of any one part of the country, but the common sense of the best part of the whole of the United Kingdom, and it is of the utmost importance at a moment like this that the whole British people should not look backwards, but forwards—that we should resume our work in a spirit of co-operation, putting behind us all malice and all vindictiveness.[874]

In Cabinet that day, the news that the TUC had agreed to an unconditional surrender had been met with relief from all sides. The moderates in government were both relieved and delighted at the apparent return of

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872 The Baldwin Papers, Conservative Central Office report – The Prime Minister's pledge to Trade Unionists, 8th June 1926, Volume 22 D.3.4 - General Strike 1926 Documents

873 *Workers Bulletin*, 13 May 1926

874 House of Commons Debate, 12 May 1926, vol 195, cc 877-9

reason on the 12th of May. They had seen off the strike without unnecessary violence and in doing so had avoided the spectre of revolution which had haunted all their minds during the nine days. Baldwin had seen the strike as a challenge to democratic government and a fight against the forces of anarchy. The message he had given the nation on the 8th of May had remained true to the end – though he was "a man of peace", he could not "surrender the safety and security of the British Constitution" and indeed he had not.[875] In Cabinet, Baldwin announced that the recruitment of Special Constables and Volunteers would cease and that negotiations on the coal dispute could resume. As he told the assembled Cabinet, it was "necessary to look not behind, but ahead, in no spirit of malice or vindictiveness."[876] In Cabinet on the 13th, the Cabinet congratulated the Prime Minister, who responded again with a message to the Hardliners, emphasising the difficulties still to come and stating the great importance of retaining the right spirt for the task ahead.[877]

The victory had certainly been a decisive one. The Communist Party would not recover and the Trade Unions began to eschew those with revolutionary ideas. A key factor had been the imprisonment of the far left's leadership by the government in late 1925, showing again how important the year of preparations had been for the authorities.[878] A large number of Communist Party members had also been arrested over the course of the strike. In all, around 1,760 people were arrested using emergency powers, and over 5,000 using normal offences. It is estimated that of these, 2,500 were Communist party members.[879] This high number of Communist arrests was due to a number of factors: their policy of inciting violence; the government's prior knowledge of membership; and the police's rapid reaction to events.

It was Baldwin's moderation, calm and sense of fairness (even in the face of Hardliner pressure) combined with effective planning, that had helped pull public opinion away from the strikers and towards the government, and with the victory of reason on the 12th, he had become a national hero – at least to the middle classes and those workers who had little sympathy with the strike. His response to a letter of praise from the King shows just why he was so loved: "If there was one mission more than another which as Your Majesty's first servant it has been my dearest wish to fulfil, it was to lessen the misunderstandings which threaten

875 *The Times*, 9 May, 1926
876 Cabinet Conclusions, 12 May 1926, CAB 23/52/30
877 Cabinet Conclusions, 13 May 1926, CAB 23/53/1
878 J.T. Murphy, *Political Meanings of the Great Strik*e, London, 1926, p. 80
879 Phillips, *General Strike*, p. 204

industrial strikes and to prevent the possibility of such conflicts as the one from which we are emerging."[880] Baldwin had remained a moderate and had seen off the threat of those Hardliners who opposed him. He had offered the chance for the General Council to surrender and they had taken it, and perhaps most importantly, he had refused to escalate and perhaps as a result had saved the nation from bloody class war. To Blake, a major factor in the failure of class war igniting in Britain was "the genuine kindliness, generosity and goodwill [of Baldwin], which did something to soften the stark confrontation of the classes and the masses."[881] For Baldwin himself, the failure of the General Strike had only confirmed his belief in the political common sense of the British working man, stating in his reply to the King that the victory was down to "the spirit of fair play and inborn common sense of the people."[882]

At the very end, J. H. Thomas himself showed how close he believed the situation had come to revolution, telling the Liberal J. H. Samuel, of the Samuel Commission, thanks for "all you have done towards averting what I am satisfied might easily have developed into a revolution."[883] Mrs Baldwin wrote to Neville to say that the Prime Minister had retreated to Chequers and slept for ten hours without a miner or striker entering his dreams.[884]

Legislation and recrimination: The debate over Trade Union legislation, 1926 – 1927

Though moderation and pragmatism had ended the strike peacefully and quickly, many of the Hardliners still believed that the threat would exist until stamped out. Churchill, perhaps realising that the moderates had won the day, quietly moved from the spotlight, and their chief cheerleader therefore soon became Lord Birkenhead. On the strike's defeat, he wrote to Irwin in India stating, "The result of the General Strike altogether delights one; for it shows that this old England of ours retains its spirit unimpaired. The people tolerate [only] up to a point Russian infiltration, Trades Unionist tyranny, Red Flag demonstrations and Socialist Sunday Schools."[885] His extremism can perhaps best be summed up with an account of him

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880 The Baldwin Papers, Baldwin to the King, 9 May 1926, Volume 177/7, The Royal Box

881 Blake, *The Conservative Party*, p. 245

882 Cited in Ball, *Portrait of a Party*, p. 19, original source, Baldwin to the King, 13 May 1926, Baldwin MSS, 177/7

883 Parliamentary Archives, J.H Thomas to H. Samuel, 18 May 1926, Samuel Papers 67/59

884 Mrs Baldwin to N.C, 15 May 1926, NC 11/1/26

885 The British Library The India Office, Papers of 1st Earl of Birkenhead as Secretary of State for India 1924-28, F.E to Irwin, 20 May 1926, Mss

addressing a band of strikers in the aftermath of the government victory:

> Voices from the crowd shouted “wait til we put up the barricades!” His response was clear: “Barricades! You dare talk to me about barricades! - we've beaten you with brains, and if it comes to fighting two can play at that game! Put up your barricades, and we'll slit every one of your soft white throats!” As the crowd shouted in anger he shouted: “Howl on you wolves of Moscow!”[886]

It was his belief that the strike was merely the beginning of a long war against the unions and the workers:

> In my judgement we shall have to set our teeth as we should have done if six months of war had been necessary, and carry the matter once and for all to a conclusion which will involve a complete reconsideration of the exceptional legal status conceded to the trade unions, and which they seem to me, under the influence of extremist elements, to have grossly abused.[887]

Churchill too was clear in his view that the menace of Bolshevism was still a very real one, though he was proud of Britain’s stand against this new menace. In June 1926, he told a crowd in London:

> Those miscreants [The Bolsheviks] who have ruined their country are powerless in their efforts to ruin ours. In their plans of world revolution they find this island an obstacle. If they could only pull down Britain, ruin its prosperity, plunge it into anarchy, and obliterate the British Empire as a force in the world, they are convinced that the road will be clear for general butchery, followed by universal tyranny of which they will be the head, and out of which they will get the profits.[888]

Joynson-Hicks was also busy, determined to ensure that any future strike could be met with strong resistance, and he pushed for further powers to be granted to the Emergency Powers Act that had been so useful in May. In a memo to the Cabinet, he requested that the Act include the powers for government to take over National

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886 The Earl of Birkenhead, *Fredrick Edwin, Earl of Birkenhead*, London, 1933. p. 265

887 Cited in Renshaw, *The General Strike*, p. 240

888 Churchill, The Bolshevik Menace, June 19, 1926: Unionist Association Meeting, Alexandra Park, London, Churchill: His Complete Speeches, p. 4001.

Infrastructure, food supply, volunteer recruitment and other things in any emergency situation.[889]

With their push for military force during the strike unsuccessful, the Hardliners now reignited the idea of harsh legislation to break the union's power. Led by Birkenhead, the Hardliners pushed forward a new Trade Unions Bill to punish and weaken the unions, building on existing legislation but adding new measures to stop the events of May occurring again.[890] Birkenhead was quick to reignite the debates that had been ongoing during the strike over legislation, raising the issue in Cabinet as soon after the end of the strike as June.[891] The backbenchers, too, were largely behind the Hardliners in the aftermath of the strike – one letter sent to Baldwin from Conservative Central Office warned him that 46 associations believed that picketing should be abolished, and a further 12 believed that ballots of trade unions should be under government supervision.[892] It was opposed by the Prime Minister but in the Cabinet meeting in December on the topic it found the support of a majority of members.[893] Baldwin, furious at this undoing of his conciliatory work, called for bygones to be bygones but was overruled by the majority of his party.

By 1927, the Bill seemed certain to pass with Baldwin outmanoeuvred in Cabinet and the wider party. With Birkenhead supported by Joynson-Hicks, Churchill, Worthington-Evans, Hogg and others, to make matters worse even trusted colleagues like Steel-Maitland had sent a memo that pointed out some of the positives the Bill could bring.[894] Cecil, too, had been in touch to warn against his policy of moderation:

> I do hope we shall not listen too much to those who are proliferating smoothing things. After the troubles of last year there will no doubt be a calm period; that is the time to try and get things on a level footing. If we do not use it it will merely be followed by further worse storms which may well get out of control... I am no advocate of violent measures. As far as Trade Union legislation is concerned, I doubt it would be wise to do less than declare General Strikes... illegal.[895]

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889 Emergency Regulations Memo - William Joynson Hicks, 20 July 1926 - CAB 24/180/79
890 H. A. Millis, British Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, 1927, Journal of Political Economy, V.36, N.3 (Jun., 1928), pp. 305-329
891 Cabinet Conclusions, 9 June 1926, CAB 23/53/7
892 The Baldwin Papers, Conservative Central Office to Baldwin, 9 June 1926, Volume 10, D.1 Home Affairs
893 Cabinet Conclusion , 15 December 1926 - CAB 23/53/35
894 Cabinet memo by Arthur Steel-Maitland, The Trade Union Dispute Bill, 22 March 1927, CAB 24/186/1
895 Baldwin Papers, Cecil to Baldwin, 9 of January 1927, Volume 10 D.1 Home Affairs

By the end of March, the decision had been made. Baldwin, seemingly having backed down in the face of Cabinet pressure, relented to the Bill being introduced after Easter.[896] The Bill was backed and announced by Hogg to the Commons in May 1927. In the debate, his attorney general mask slipped quickly, with him retorting to a Labour question, "Members opposite had such short memories… of the folly and wickedness of the general strike."[897] Worthington-Evans made his views clear, "It is to the interest of the followers of the hon. gentlemen opposite that they should know that if they take part in a general strike, they are taking part in an illegal strike for which they may suffer" before going on to ask a Labour MP about his links with communists: "Yesterday he was speaking as if with his head turned over his shoulder, with one eye on the extremists outside, afraid to say that he condemned the general strike."[898] On the 4th of May, Baldwin finally made a speech on the matter. Obviously torn between Cabinet and his own view, he stayed neutral, raising only that, "You have the fact that in some unions you have had the power gradually getting into the hands of what to-day is called the Minority Movement" but later, after being pushed, seemingly laying out his excuses for the Bill: "I was pressed to pass a Bill during the General Strike; I was pressed to pass a Bill immediately afterwards. I declined to do that. In either case I knew that, although it would have been perfectly easy at that moment to have forced any legislation through, the chances were that it would have been of an extreme and vindictive kind."[899] Churchill made clear that he was in full support of the legislation, describing it as a just result from the actions of the left in calling the General Strike:

> This Bill arose out of the general strike only because the general strike was the culmination of a gross and a grave stroke at the public and the general community. I well remember the situation which arose immediately after the War. The new menace was the threat of the strike of the Triple Alliance—the railwaymen, the miners and the transport workers… You have no right to strike at the fortunes of our struggling industries and drag them into a party fight. You have no right to carry the war of Socialism and Toryism into the mines and workshops of this country. Not only is it a question of right, but you cannot do that without inflicting injury upon the country as a whole, but especially upon that particular section of the country whom you make it your pride to claim that you

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896 Cabinet Conclusions, 30 March 1925, CAB 23/54/20
897 House of Commons Debate 2 May 1927 Vol 205 cols 1287-426
898 House of Comms Debate 3 May 1927 Vol 205 cols 1492-1496
899 House of Comms Debate 4 May 1927 Vol 205 cols 1639-716

represent.[900]

The Act was passed in July 1927 and served only to maintain the antagonism between the unions of government until its repeal in 1946.[901] But despite this, Baldwin remained firm in his belief in moderation, and though aggrieved at his defeat in the Trade Unions Bill, he held back the strongest of excesses against the defeated Unions and their members.

Trade Union legislation /ARCOS[902] and the break in relations with Russia, 1927

With the end of the General Strike, the domestic threat of Bolshevism and revolution in Great Britain had seemingly passed; however, in Cabinet the wider issue of Russian aggression and curbing the powers of the Unions remained. Both the moderates and Hardliners agreed that Russia had played a role in inciting the events of 1926, and continued to do so across the Empire, but what action to take remained a point of contention. The last debates before the strike had seen the arguments over the issue of Russia ending with a compromise; formal relations would continue but any Communist activity in Britain would be monitored. Now attention turned once again to the matter.[903] The end of the strike had also seen the debates on Trade Union Legislation reopen with many believing that they should be legally curbed from ever entering into such a strike again.

The first small debate was to occur around the way in which the threat was monitored and would set the scene for the actions of Jix in the ARCOS crisis the following year. After Baldwin took over for his second term in November 1924, he had ended the regular updates and intercepts from Special Branch on Russia – much to Churchill's anger. Indeed in Churchill's eyes, "so far as foreign and defence policy were concerned" the intercepts supplied had been of more importance than "any source of knowledge at the disposal of the state."[904] In their discussions during the summer of 1925, Austen Chamberlain had supported Baldwin's decision not to circulate the notes; however, he too appears to have realised the danger and embarrassment of

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900 House of Comms Debate 23 June 1927 Vol 207 cols 2077-185

901 Young, *Stanley Baldwin,* p. 124

902 The All-Russian Co-operative Society (ARCOS) was the principal body responsible for the orchestration of Anglo-Russian trade

903 Cabinet Minutes, 29 July 1925 and August 5 1925, CAB 23/50

904 A Chamberlain Archives, Churchill to A Chamberlain, 21 and 22 Nov, 1924, Chamberlain MSS, AC 51/58 and 51/61

this continued campaign by Russian Bolsheviks, writing to Baldwin that "a great mass of information has accumulated in this office proving the continuous hostile activities of the Soviet Agencies against the British Empire."[905] He explained that "nearly all this information is of the most highly secret character, which I do not circulate to Ministers lest any carelessness in the handling of the papers should endanger our sources of information."[906] For Jix, this was both a challenge to his authority and hubris and would play a big role in the later build up to the ARCOS raid.

It was to be part of a wider argument in Cabinet that would last until 1927; its focus was on what risk remained domestically from Bolshevism and around whether legislation should be brought in to curb the Unions, and if so how this would work. Baldwin and Austen Chamberlain again were on the same page on TU legislation in the fallout from the General Strike. Austen wrote to the PM, "I will back your experience and judgement in these matters... for I know your objects are mine, and as to means I shall trust confidently your more intimate knowledge of this subject."[907] On the other side, the Hardliners remained largely unchanged and were led by Churchill, Jix and Birkenhead. In December 1926, Neville Chamberlain suggested that a clause be added to make any new legislation not merely restrictive, arguing that it should only not be legal to strike in key industries had conciliation paths not been followed. Churchill was furious, protesting that the Bill had already been too long in the making. Chamberlain observed that the government should be making the point that a man should have the right to strike, but also the right not to. Churchill, however, believed that no such right existed.[908] As Baldwin had told him in support – the government had to show that it was in the national interest and not partisan in order to keep the support it won in 1924.[909]

It was at this point that Balfour, so quiet in the General Strike, entered the fray, arguing strongly along with the Hardliners for the new anti-strike legislation and declaring that the strike was influenced by Bolshevik Russia and advocating strong action against it.[910] Birkenhead too was clear in his view and pushing hard both within Cabinet and without to bring key allies to his side. He was certain that hard-line sanctions on the

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905 A Chamberlain Archives, Chamberlain memo for Baldwin, 24 July 1925, Chamberlain MSS, AC 51/81
906 A Chamberlain Archives, Chamberlain memo for Baldwin, 24 July 1925, Chamberlain MSS, AC 51/81
907 Baldwin Papers, Chamberlain to Baldwin, 17 May 1926, Baldwin MSS 11 f. 26
908 The Times, 11 December, 1926
909 N Chamberlain Archives, N.C to A.V.C, 6 October 1926, NC 1/23/373
910 Egremont, Balfour, P.333 and Jones, Whitehall Diary I, p. 209

unions and making them liable for the cost of their strikes was the answer, telling Irwin that "the matter has to be fought out some time, and in my opinion it must be now."[911] On the 15th and 21st of March 1927, the Cabinet met over the issue. Churchill was infuriated by the continued delays, while Steel-Maitland and Chamberlain kept arguing for it to be watered down.[912] Baldwin stated that he was happy to state that a General Strike should be made illegal, but that peaceful picketing must be allowed to continue.[913] In the end, Baldwin succumbed to the pressure of the Hardliners on the Bill. Neville Chamberlain remained frustrated that Baldwin would not openly assert his authority to end the debate, and the legislation that was finalised in 1927 remained harsh. It was a further blow for N Chamberlain – to him the General Strike and rise in unemployment made it clear that radical change was needed, with a reform of the Poor Law and no revenge-based legislation the first steps. Churchill, however, using his position as Chancellor, argued that the cost of any Poor Law changes would too high, with Baldwin's reputation in slight decline from the high levels following the general strike.[914] It seemed that the Hardliners had won both of these matters.[915]

The other major debate on the issue of Bolshevism would be the future of Britain's relationship with Russia itself. At the end of the General Strike in 1926, Baldwin and Austen Chamberlain's policy towards Russia remained the same: on one hand that Britain should be justified to break relations due to Russia's hostile acts, and on the other that it may not be in Britain's long-term interests to do so.[916] Now with the debate reignited, the Moderates were again forced to defend their views to the Hardliners who saw the General Strike as an opportunity to push once more for an end to any recognition of Russia. This policy of caution and moderation championed by A Chamberlain was by June 1926 under direct attack, with himself and the FCO finally losing a rear-guard action to maintain relations with Russia. The leaders of the anti-Bolsheviks in the Cabinet were Joynson-Hicks, Churchill and Birkenhead.[917] Jix too had been concerned at the dropping of the briefing notes and the issue of recognition, and poured through whatever he could. During the strike, he had claimed that ARCOS was funding the strikers, and though he later withdrew this, it was something that he

911 India Office, Secretary of State/Viceroy Correspondence 1924-28, F.E to Irwin, 10 June 1926, Mss Eur D703
912 N Chamberlain Archives, His notes, 10 March 1927, NC 7/11/20/7
913 Cabinet Conclusions, 21 March 1927, Cab 27/327
914 David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain*, pp. 491-495
915 Harriette Flory, The Arcos Raid and the Rupture of Ango-Soviet Relations, 1927 *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Oct 1977), pp. 707-723
916 Christopher Andrew, British Intelligence and the Breach with Russia in 1927, The Historical Journal, 25, 4 (1982), pp. 957-964
917 Christopher Andrew, British Intelligence and the Breach with Russia in 1927, The Historical Journal, 25, 4 (1982), pp. 957-964

now became highly focused on.[918] By the end of June, he, Birkenhead and Churchill again asked that relations with Russia be cut.[919]

The matter was debated at Cabinet. There, Chamberlain argued against any rupture and despite a long debate and support for both sides, he was backed by Baldwin and relations continued. Chamberlain declared that any "immediate politic advantages… would soon be outweighed by practical disadvantages". The key swaying point for the unsure members was that the proof was not there to back up all the Hardliners' claims.[920] However, the Hardliners were as powerful a force as ever in the Cabinet and remained firm on the issue; their view is best summed up in the words of J. D. Gregory, one of the assistant undersecretaries at the Foreign Office:

> The Soviet Union is to all intents and purposes – short of direct armed conflict – at war with the British Empire. Whether by interference in the strikes at home or by fomenting the anti-British forces in China, in fact, by her action all the world over, from Riga to Java, the Soviet Power has as its main objective the destruction of the British Power. To that all other activities are subordinated.[921]

With this view strongly held by men such as Churchill, Birkenhead and Jix, the Cabinet continued to raise and argue the matter of breaking relations. Such was the strain that Chamberlain would complain, "the Cabinets have been so very tiring and contentious and I have been disappointed at receiving so little support from some of my colleagues and having my informed and considered opinions swept aside so lightly by them under pressure from the *Daily Mail* and the backbenches who don't know what I know of the state of Europe."[922]

As the Cabinet returned to London in January 1927, the debate erupted again, with an angry Chamberlain refusing to contemplate a break of relations in two separate meetings.[923] However, despite his and Baldwin's

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[918] Joynson-Hicks two Cabinet memos entitled 'Russian Money', C.P 236(26) and C.P 244(26), 11 and 15 June 1925, CAB 24/180
[919] Cabinet Minutes, 11 June 1926, CAB 24/180/36
[920] Cabinet Minutes, 16 June 1926, CAB 23/50/26
[921] Foreign Office Archives, Russia Memorandum By Mr Gregory, 10 Dec 1926, FO 371/11787/N5670/387/38
[922] Chamberlain Papers, Chamberlain to Baldwin, 21 December 1926, AC 5/3/54
[923] Cabinet Minutes, 17 January 1927, CAB 23/54/2 and Cabinet Minutes, 24 Jan 1927, CAB 24/184/23

seeming intransigence, the moderates had already started to bend to the pressure from the Hardliners. In the Cabinet meeting of the 17th of January, Chamberlain told his colleagues that the Foreign Office was drafting "a new protest to Soviet Russia based exclusively on published utterances of Soviet authorities."[924] Even this was not enough. The Hardliners denounced it as too feeble and under their pressure it was turned down on the 18th of February, declaring that a breach of relations was now the only option. Austen was especially frustrated by the support for Churchill and the Hardliners from the backbenches and party members. He stated to his family that if only they knew what he knew about the state of Europe, they would think differently.[925] Birkenhead now seemed to hold the strongest views among the Hardliners, partly due to his now wider view that Britain was at war at home and abroad with aggressive Bolshevism. From 1926, he had been arguing for a breach in relations with Moscow, showing his change of view from his involvement in Genoa. According to Amery, he argued in Cabinet "at length and with much eloquence in favour of a breach."[926] He would also write to Irwin that "we shall be kicked into taking this course... we had better do it now."[927]

On the 16th of February 1927, another Cabinet session was held on the issue of breaking with Russia. The groups took the same positions: Chamberlain opposed a rupture for, in his view, it would not prevent the breaches or revolutionary activities but would affect trade. He also claimed that it could help the extremists in Britain that so concerned Churchill – pushing the Communists and Labour party together, as well as the Trade Unions. Under heavy pressure from Churchill and Jix, Chamberlain agreed that a major incident such as the Zinoviev Letter would be grounds for a break.[928] It was only after the intervention of Baldwin that a compromise was finally agreed. On the 23rd of February, a sterner message was declared stating that rupture of relations would occur if Russia failed to stop making its hostile actions and statements to Britain and her Empire.[929] As Amery records, the moderates were losing the battle; their economic arguments were strong but in the aftermath of the General Strike and up against the emotive and public arguments of Churchill,

924 Cabinet Minutes, 17 January 1927, CAB 23/54
925 A Chamberlain Archives, AC to IC, 20 Feb 1927, AC 5/1/410
926 Amery Diaries, 16 February 1927
927 India Office, Secretary of State/Viceroy Correspondence 1924-28, F.E to Irwin, 26 May 1927
928 Cabinet Minutes, 16 February 1927, CAB 23/54/10
929 Cabinet Minutes, 23 February 1927, CAB 23/54/13: David Dilks, Neville Chamberlain, p. 523

Birkenhead and Jix, the Prime Minister's position on Russia was becoming increasingly untenable.[930] It was to prove a compromise that would come back to haunt the moderates far sooner than they could have imagined. On the 3rd of March 1927, Austen Chamberlain was forced to tell his colleagues that evidence of new threats linked to Russia had come to light despite the note, though he refused to allow the Cabinet to know any details until the Attorney General Sir Douglass Hogg had examined it.[931] On the 16th of March, Hogg stood announced to the Cabinet that the information was genuine.[932] It pointed a finger at the All Russian Co-operative Society (ARCOS) and suggested that through them, Russia was still engaging in subversive activities to harm Britain and her Empire. Now the only question remaining was what the Cabinet would decide to do.

This impasse would last until May with both sides arguing their cases. Things would change when the Secretary of State for War, Worthington-Evans, complied a note for the Cabinet on the 10th, stating that communists were employed in war and naval establishments and that they must be rooted out and dismissed.[933] The next day, he noted that the documents backing this view were missing and told the Home Secretary who went straight to Baldwin and Chamberlain and made clear his views – that they had been stolen by Bolshevik agents. The intelligence services decided that the Soviet Trade Delegation and the All Russian Co-operative Society (ARCOS), which had been acting as a front for subversive activities, were the culprits. Breaking point had been reached. Alongside the Home Secretary, the intelligence service argued that the properties owned by ARCOS should be searched, which the Hardliners supported. With the weight of the arguments in front of them, Chamberlain and Baldwin gave way to the pressure and the ARCOS raid was authorised.[934] Jix and Churchill realised that evidence must be gained to force a total break and by the 11th of May, Jix believed that he had found it. Receiving information that ARCOS had procured a secret British Army signals training manual, a police raid was ordered by the Home Secretary for the following day.[935] As *The Observer* commented, they had been defeated in Cabinet by the Hardliners – "the strength of those

930 *Amery Diaries*, 16 February 1927 p. 496
931 Cabinet Conclusions, 3 March 1927, CAB 23/90B/2
932 Cabinet Conclusions, 16 March 1927, CAB 23/90B/3
933 Cabinet Minutes, 19 May 1927, CAB 24/184
934 Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain, p. 276*
935 His actions were described later to the House in House of Commons Debate,,5th series, Vol 206, 26 May 1927, cols 2302-3

members of Cabinet who advocated a breach with Russia is the accomplished fact of this raid".[936]

On Thursday 12 May 1927, London Metropolitan Police Special Branch agents raided the HQ of the Russian trade delegation and of ARCOS (the All-Russian Cooperative Society). They were searching for a War Office Document that the Secretary of State for War, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans, had discovered was missing that week.[937] The House was informed on the same day with the Home Secretary informing the chamber that "Information was placed before me on Wednesday evening by the heads of the police, upon which I authorised them to apply to a magistrate for a warrant to search the premises of Arcos. That warrant was applied for and granted."[938] It took a week after the raid for the matter to be discussed by Cabinet, meeting on the 19th of May. The situation was clear but Baldwin delayed and only made his final decision clear to the House on the 24th of May. This delay stemmed from divisions in the Cabinet on the split, with Chamberlain and Baldwin still arguing a case against the Hardliners.[939] As Flory points out, the raid had shown the clear Cabinet divides on the issues of bolshevism and Russia. It took Baldwin and his Foreign Secretary to be totally manoeuvred and cornered but in the end they were defeated by the Hardliners and agreed to a break that they had previously wanted to avoid.[940] The War Office document was not recovered but 250,000 other pieces of evidence were, including rifles, and employee Anton Miller was caught burning papers.[941]

After the raid, the Cabinet argued and hesitated for two weeks. The information they hoped to get in the raid was not found, though documents proving links between ARCOS and Bolshevik groups were found. Telegrams were also found between ARCOS and Moscow, which were described as secret documents in Cabinet on May 23rd.[942] Even with the failure to find the missing papers, the raid proved the intelligence services right and showed clear evidence that these organisations had been acting as fronts for Russian propaganda and subversion. The Cabinet agreed with the Hardliners and insisted on breaking relations with

936 Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 458

937 Flory, The Arcos Raid and the Rupture of Ango-Soviet Relations, p707

938 House of Commons Debate, Hansard 206, 11 May 1927, 795-96

939 Flory, The Arcos Raid and the Rupture of Ango-Soviet Relations, p.719

940 Flory, The Arcos Raid and the Rupture of Ango-Soviet Relations, p. 721

941 HC Debate, Hansard, 206, 24 May 1927, 1852-50

942 CAB 23/55 and N. West, '*MI5: British Security Service Operations 1909-1945'*, 1983, London, pp. 65-70

Russia.[943] Birkenhead wrote again to Irwin, "At last we have got rid of the Bolsheviks. Personally I am delighted, though I think we ought to have done it at the moment the General Strike was over."[944] Baldwin announced the charges against Russia to the House on May the 24th, and returned on the 26th to declare the end of relations with Russia.[945] After ten years of debate, the rupture with Russia that the Hardliners had hoped for had finally occurred, with the ARCOS raid the final straw after years of strikes, debate and Cabinet splits.

Conclusion

Despite these attempts by some to keep the fight going, the General Strike signalled a sea-change in the politics of revolution in Great Britain. It was the end of a period that had threatened to descend into anarchy and violence – the final chapter in nearly ten years of unrest and strikes across the nation. The government had won and had won without, for the most part, resorting to overwhelming violence and force. The first test had come with the deal with the miners made by Lloyd George coming to an end in 1925. Under great pressure to tackle the crisis head on, Baldwin opened new negotiations and a deal was reached – something many of the Hardliners saw as a defeat as a middle-way policy had once again been enacted. Baldwin had allowed, or indeed had no choice, in giving the Hardliners a say in events, giving control of new anti-strike powers to Joynson-Hicks, stockpiling supplies, enacting the Emergency Legislation, recalling large numbers of soldiers and allowing the recruitment of volunteers.

But Baldwin was able to stop the worst excesses of his Hardline colleagues and maintain dialogue with the unions that would eventually prove fruitful. In the build-up to the strike, we see almost total ascendency by the Hardliners in the Cabinet, but the Prime Minister had not given up on negotiations and throughout April 1926 was locked in discussions with the mine owners and union leaders to try and reach a last-minute compromise. Despite this perseverance, the Hardliners forced the Prime Minister into some decisions he would rather not have pursued, driving him to end negotiations on the eve of the strike, deploy armed troops

943 Campbell, *FE Smith*, 787

944 India Office, Secretary of State/Viceroy Correspondence 1924-28, F.E to Irwin, 26 May 1927

945 House of Commons Debate , Vol 206, 24 May 1927, cols. 1842-54 and 26 May 1927, cols 2207-22, 2299-2306

on the streets and issue strong rhetoric against the unions. It was only with Joynson-Hicks moving towards the moderates, and other Cabinet members such as Neville Chamberlain putting their head above the parapet, that Baldwin began to regain control. It is important to note that in the aftermath of the strike, the last clash over anti-strike legislation was also won by Baldwin, though admittedly again with compromise. Here we have seen that in the face of the General Strike itself, key figures from among the Hardliners were pushed into accepting the more moderate approach put forward by the Prime Minister. Doing so watered down the Hardliners' Cabinet power enough to end their influence on policy creation.

This change in the Cabinet is first seen in the debates surrounding Red Friday, though it is clear that this was almost certainly merely a delaying tactic by the Hardliners to ensure a clash with the militant left came at the point they feel most prepared. However Jix seeing reason in the General Strike, the political intelligence of Baldwin in putting Churchill at *The Gazette*, and the marginalisation of Birkenhead all mean that the moderates effectively seized control of the Cabinet at the vital point and, though willing to see the strike out until its conclusion, did so without the use of the military, large-scale violence or other inflammatory actions. As Ramsden states in his history of the Conservative Party: "the moderation Baldwin had shown in the build up to the fight was an asset to the government in persuading moderate opinion in the country that the strike must be defeated unconditionally."[946] Indeed, such was the success of the government's policy that the unions by the 12th of May had come to the negotiating table. Politically, the nation began to move toward the centre, and slowly the Labour Party pulled away from the extremist elements that had led them towards class conflict. The initial increase in Communist membership by those angry at the unions quickly disappeared and, although the Communist Party doubled its membership in 1926, it had lost all its new recruits by 1927.[947] It was not the workers or the unions who were the victors, nor was it the Hardliners in the government; the strike had been won by the moderates and most importantly by Baldwin, solidifying his continuing belief in his middle-way approach.

This important victory in the Cabinet ensured that the most potentially explosive clash between the left and the government occurred without revolution or large-scale violence and effectively was a major victory for

946 Morgan, *Ramsay MacDonald*, p. 267

947 Renshaw, *The General Strike*, p. 244

the moderates. The Hardliners, however, would remain a faction in Cabinet until the following year and although they were a small group, they remained a formidable one. Jix was also back as a key figure, and Churchill and Birkenhead held major sway in the Cabinet and Party. It was this group that used the last of their energies to ensure that by the end of 1927, Churchill's goal from 1921 had been met – the breaking of relations with Russia and the end of trade between the nations until the Labour government reignited relations in 1929. In achieving this through the ARCOS raid and subsequent political debates, the Hardliners had managed to outmanoeuvre Baldwin due to assets they had not possessed in the General Strike – mass backbench support, Cabinet agreement (largely due to irrefutable evidence) and public sympathy. All of these were largely down to the actions of the Russians such that even the moderates could not defend such clear evidence of wrongdoing. Relations with Russia were therefore ended, and with this last clear victory the Hardliners and the splits in Cabinet over the issue were ended. Due to changing international circumstances, relative union/working class peace and new foreign enemies, these were not reignited during Baldwin's time in office. In this last key period, therefore the Hardliners had the final say, yet the moderates had ensured the real victory in terms of the way that they approached the General Strike. The moderation that they showed ensured that harmony between classes was established after the union defeat and effectively ended the real threat of Bolshevik-inspired revolution in Britain.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

As this thesis has aimed to show, the ten years between 1917 and 1927 was a period of intense internal debate for the Conservative Party, both within the Lloyd George Coalition and when alone in government. It saw the issue of Bolshevism create two clear factions within the Cabinet, the Hardliners and the moderates, as well as a larger silent group. The decade saw the Hardliner faction with its key figures push for an aggressive policy towards the threat of Bolshevism both internationally and domestically, with key debates such as around intervention, strikebreaking and the recognition of Russia occurring throughout the period. As a result, the moderates were almost forced to form and articulate a more pragmatic approach to avoid further class division and conflict and push for social, financial and military prudence. The key questions that this research has sought to answer are how this internal power battle was fought over the various flash points of the decade; how Cabinet divided during this time and which of the factions emerged in the ascendency; and how this influenced how policy was formed? While this thesis does comment on the reality of the threat in question, this perhaps is of secondary importance to the research on these groups as, as is stated within the document, the Hardliners to a large extent believed that this new ideology was a threat (though one that could be used to political advantage at times) and the debates surrounding the matter were real in Cabinet, with both sides accepting the premise of a Bolshevik threat to Great Britain.

It is the detailed exploration of these Cabinet factions in the Lloyd George Coalition and subsequent Conservative Governments until 1927 that this thesis has sought to execute. In establishing what these factions stood for, who the key figures within them were, and how they clashed over the issue of Bolshevism and the outcome of these debates, this thesis is filling a gap in the current available history of the inter-war period. Sandwiched between the two biggest conflicts the world has ever faced, it is perhaps unsurprising that the inter-war period itself has been in many ways academically underrepresented. Even within inter-war history, domestic politics in Britain is less explored than other areas, such as appeasement, the rise of racism, Irish Home Rule and the maintenance of Empire to name a few. Internationally, there is also a wealth of research on the rise of extremism in Europe, such as the domestic situation in Russia, Germany and to some extent France, but not as much is available on the domestic risks facing Britain. As my literature review has

shown, what is available on the topic focuses on either the left-wing perspective, a specific event (such as the General Strike) or on a particular figure in Cabinet. Therefore, this thesis aimed to look at the key Cabinet clashes over the issue of Bolshevism between 1917 and 1927 and to analyse how these affected Coalition and Conservative Cabinets, who took part in these debates and the impact this had on the decisions made.

While there is research looking at some aspects of the Cabinet reaction to this, it is focused on narrow events. The revolt on the Clyde, for example, has been researched in a number of excellent studies. But while these offer a fascinating look at the way in which that one crisis was handled, they do not give an overview of the whole time period and the various other issues involved. The same goes for the soldiers' strikes, police strikes and even the Hands Off Russia movement. Perhaps the most obvious example of this lack of attention to Bolshevism, and how the Cabinet split over the threat, comes with the General Strike, yet there have been no previous studies purely on the machinations of government, the reactions of the Cabinet and the internal conflicts that were on-going at this time during the build-up and throughout the duration of the event. I have therefore sought to offer a full analysis of this period. This provides a new measure of how Cabinet and the Conservative Party were split over Bolshevism, which factions within them gained the upper hand when it came to policy making, and why, and the impact of the two Prime Ministers involved. Using archives, correspondence, Hansard and a variety of other sources, this thesis breaks new ground, giving a detailed account and explanation of the internal debate within the Cabinet over these issues and finally offering a conclusion as to the impact that these debates had on the eventual decisions made.

The existence of the Hardliners in Cabinet was an important factor in the way that decisions were made on a range of matters related to Bolshevism; as a result, these clashes had an impact on policy that was beyond the norm. The strength of the Hardliners, the key figures within the group and their dedication to the issue meant that the moderates, which included both Prime Ministers, were actually forced to defend their policy and in nearly every example change it to ensure that it had Cabinet support. Amazingly, this did not only occur during the Coalition, when one would perhaps expect more give and take, but also during majority Conservative governments. It was also not only a split between Liberal and Conservative, though this is certainly a factor in the support of the silent section of Cabinet for Lloyd George, but sees key Tories backing the moderates and Churchill initially a Liberal hard-line leader. This research also gives us a new

understanding of how the Cabinet system worked and how policy was created in this period, as well as how the key figures of the age could still operate with independence and push their ideology openly, even when this was clearly different from that of the Prime Minister. It also offers an interesting perspective on how the Cabinet operated in such an uncertain age, in which instability was heightened by the nature of the Lloyd George Coalition, the sometimes-dire state of the economy, the uncertain geopolitics of post-war Europe, the external threat of a new strong Labour Party, and the initial weakness of Baldwin's position after the 1923 election.

The Cabinet splits: Overview and recap

With the Russian Revolution in 1917 a new threat to Britain emerged: Russian Bolshevism. It was one that could strike internationally by traditional military means or through the use of propaganda throughout Europe and Empire, and domestically by inciting class violence and revolution. The first clashes in Cabinet came not with the Revolution itself but instead with the debates around intervening in the Russian Civil War to help the Whites defeat this new threat before it could become established. It was through this early clash that the factions on Bolshevism were to emerge. Led by Winston Churchill and Lord Curzon, the group that advocated aggressive policy towards Russia, known here as the Hardliners, were to play a major role in shaping policy over Bolshevism for the next decade – an astonishing accomplishment. Churchill was undoubtedly the key figure in this grouping and his obsession with the issue, as well as his charisma and position within Cabinet, made him a formidable opponent. His fear of Bolshevism and disgust at the collapse of traditional order and institutions in Russia were certainly major factors in his militancy. Alongside General Wilson, a number of Cabinet members were also supportive and sympathetic to the faction, willing to back them but not at all costs. These men, largely Milner and Balfour, were important figures in the debates, and natural Hardliners but less ideological and more easily swayed by the arguments put forward by their opponents.

The other faction, the moderates, seemed to occur as a direct reaction to stop any Hardliner domination of Cabinet debates. Lloyd George is the key figure and as Prime Minister holds the most sway in these debates; he was largely influenced by the economic and social realities and his understanding of the consequences of

any such military action. His main ally was Austen Chamberlain who as a Conservative is important in showing that the factions were not based on Cabinet party lines as the Diehards were (something Churchill also clearly shows). Also clear is that alongside these two factions, a silent group of Cabinet members was also important as these members did not greatly involve themselves in the debates and largely backed their leadership due to a combination of party politics, ambition, lack of knowledge on the topic, or junior Cabinet positions. With the Hardliners group relatively small, it must be assumed that it is the seniority of its members and strength of its arguments that led to its impact in the debates and policy-making around intervention. In these debates, we see this faction effectively push Cabinet policy towards a new trajectory, forcing Lloyd George to continue to find and supply the White Armies and limited British Troops in Russia long after he vocalised his wish to end all involvement in the situation. This trend continues and although the moderates do win the debate, we see through these Cabinet debates just how much they were pushed by the strength of the Hardliners.

Obviously, other factors were at play; with the country still reeling from war and the new threat of the Labour Party's popular version of Socialism, it was too dangerous for Lloyd George to risk unsettling his already divided Cabinet or nation. Added to this was the strength of support for Churchill and the views from Conservative Cabinet members and backbenches. So, too, did the necessity of coalition government in such a dangerous political environment. With an emboldened Labour Party and a seemingly fragile coalition, it is perhaps no surprise that Lloyd George refused to risk a split with the Conservatives and the subsequent General Election. It is this reality alongside the acceptance in a more genuine Cabinet government in the period that allowed such a divided and unruly Cabinet to remain in government. In mid-November, despite the fury of Churchill, the plan for a gradual withdrawal of the British forces stationed in Russia was agreed and troops began to leave for home. Lloyd George had been tested and had bent but with Balfour and Milner moved away from, the Moderates had won the debate eventually and after real compromise.

At the same time as the debates on intervention had been raging, a much more proximate and immediate Bolshevik threat had also split those in government. By the spring of 1917, and despite the on-going conflict in France, strikes began to occur across the country – strikes that would intensify as the war ended in 1918. These were to prove just as much a test of Cabinet unity and ideology as the debates around intervention,

with the now-established moderates and Hardliners clashing over how best to counter this potential threat. Lloyd George, alongside Conservative moderates Bonar Law and Austen Chamberlain, made it clear that they believed that the anger was based on working-class grievances, and not far-left politics or Bolshevism. The Hardliners disagreed. It was this small but vocal force that managed to gain one small victory: though a policy of moderation would be pursued, the government agreed on the arrest of a small number of key strike figures. This was enough to quell the unrest, but no agreement had been reached on Cabinet policy. In fact, the methods used allowed both factions to claim that they were right.

In 1918, unrest occurred once again, this time spreading across the country. For Churchill, Bolshevism could be seen in the unrest on-going within Britain. Worse was to come for the moderates with the signing of the peace. Lloyd George, weary from the strains of the war, went through a short period of political paralysis. Churchill and fellow Hardliners were quick to use this to their advantage. In his role as Chief of the Imperial Staff, Field Marshall Wilson even began to issue military directives. But by December, the Prime Minister was back at his best, pulling Chamberlain and Law back to his side, alongside the Liberals within the Cabinet and men such as Milner. He refused to listen to any policy to deal with the strikes except compromise and dialogue. Such was the impasse in Cabinet that both sides had been reduced to shouting across the table. With the threat of a Triple Alliance strike in January 1919, the Prime Minister ignored his split Cabinet and decided to enter negotiations. Again, the government decided on a path of caution, but its Hardliners were running out of patience in the face of what they saw as the beginnings of a full-blown insurrection.

This fear of violent unrest was soon to become reality. In January, a strike was called on the Clyde in Glasgow and soon some 70,000 men had stopped work as a result. The Hardliners had their chance and took it. The Cabinet now pushed aside the policy of appeasement that had proved so successful in 1917 and agreed to the demands of Churchill and Curzon. The strike was declared illegal and Churchill planned to use the military forces now in Scotland to enforce this order, declaring that all strikers were now at risk of long imprisonment. Key strikers were also quickly arrested. The loss of the strike leadership and threat of imprisonment and military action all certainly played a part, but so too did the financial burden of such a long strike, the suffering of strikers' families and, in all probability, the lack of any true revolutionary

fervour. But despite this success, the divide in government was to continue to grow deeper. To some in government, the conclusion of this was simple: it was the decision to give no quarter to the strikers, while employing all the military and legal might that they had available. To others it was, in fact, a more nuanced approach that had prevailed: the arrest of a handful of key figures, the legal measures employed and the delay in action had led the strike to largely burn itself out.

The membership of both factions largely remained the same throughout this period, with the key figures continuing to dominate Cabinet debate and joined by other Cabinet members in specific events. The Hardliners were a small but unified and politically powerful faction; the key moderates were similar but with the tacit support of the much larger silent section of the Cabinet. This group, as discussed, was most likely not motivated by the issue in question but by party and personal loyalty to the PM, self-interest and Cabinet collective responsibility once a decision was made. However, this approach had worked and, though hardly deliberate, the middle-way approach again had defused two dangerous situations. The revolt on the Clyde had forced the Prime Minister to allow the Hardliners major concessions to keep his Cabinet unified: here they had been allowed to call out troops and arrest the key strikers. Despite this, however, Lloyd George had also kept control of the situation, holding back the military from any excessive violence and opening a conciliatory dialogue with the mass of men on strike, calling for calm and offering the chance for a return to work without unnecessary punishment through job loss or legislation.

The same debate would come to the fore with the soldiers and police strikes occurring between 1919 and 1921. Here, however, Lloyd George saw his hand strengthened by the support of men like Milner, who had previously backed the Hardliners. The decision to act quickly to deal with the men’s concerns and also ensure that ringleaders could be prosecuted was a sensible compromise approach. The same policy was adopted with the striking police with a deal again offered, yet to keep the Cabinet onside it would not include any recognition of the Police Union. However, despite the fact that these policies seemed to work, the actions of the two factions within Cabinet show quite clearly that there was no overarching policy direction on these matters; instead a conflicted reaction emerging from the Cabinet's internal debates had been allowed to continue. In this, too, at least when the Prime Minister did not fully use his authority to determine the policy of government, it all too often became an area of Hardliner control. The natural strength of Churchill was

perhaps enough to fill any vacuum of power, or perhaps was a sign of the real and unrestrained views of the other Cabinet members. It was this that led to the middle-way reaction to Bolshevism that we focus on here.

The subsequent clashes would test the success of this approach, or indeed the Hardliners' ability to push the moderates to a middle way when the Prime Minister was unwilling to compromise. The Hands Off Russia movement in 1920 would do this. The stakes were high, with the government still unsure about the loyalty of the armed forces. Lloyd George was forced to release a statement declaring that there would be no direct intervention against Russia as a result of their war with the Poles. To the Hardliners' dismay, Britain's foreign policy had actually been changed. The Prime Minister had not allowed the vocal Hardliners to sway him and the moderates were seemingly in the ascendency in Cabinet, but a key caveat must be made – unlike other debates, the issue over Poland could not play out to the full given the Polish turnaround. Had Russia actually looked as if it was gaining any total victory over Poland, would the moderates and Hardliners' positions remained the same, or would Curzon and Churchill have gained more strength in Cabinet and moved policy? The same is true of the other moderate victory in this period, the Trade Agreement with Russia. With Britain struggling after years of conflict, Lloyd George felt strongly that new trade deals were needed, even if it meant resuming trade with the now Bolshevik Russia. Curzon was the most vocal opponent of the deal, and as foreign secretary he believed that the actions undertaken by the Russians throughout the British Empire were reason enough to cancel talks. But despite the opposition on the Conservative side of his Cabinet, Lloyd George continued and signed the trade agreement in March 1921. In the face of such pressure, it was a difficult decision for the Prime Minister, but one that in end he was saved from making after Berlin and Moscow announced their own deal – the Rapallo Agreement.

The miners, too, had begun to increase the pressure on the government by 1919. In a change from previous unrest, Lloyd George, too, was seemingly ready for a fight, stating to the Cabinet that the strike was "practical, not theoretical Bolshevism, and must be dealt with, with a firm hand."[948] The government reacted quickly and aggressively, pushing the new Emergency Powers Act through Parliament that same month. It seemed that for once agreement was apparent between the factions, but it was not to last and as news that the

[948] Cabinet Minutes, 27 July 1919, Cab 53/15/137

miners were seeking compromise reached London, more moderate members of the Cabinet agreed that negotiation should now be sought. A deal was soon brokered, lasting until the spring of 1921. It seemed as if negotiation and moderation had been the key reasons for the miners backing down, though, as Churchill pointed out, it was far from a capitulation and they had only been brought to the table by tough initial legislation. By 1921, strikes had begun again and the Hardliners looked for tough measures. Under the instruction of Churchill, London's parks were turned into military bases in case the strike turned into a full-scale revolution. With the backbenchers demanding a government victory and with Churchill, Curzon and others arguing that no ground should be given, the Prime Minister could not afford to budge on his negotiations; however, with the continued failure of the Triple Alliance to commit to the miners, it would be internal divides, not government aggression, that would spell the end for the strikers. By the end of 1921, they were forced to back down on all their key demands, on a day known as Black Friday. The government had won and they had done so largely through the tough measures that they were prepared to enact. For the Hardliners, it was a victory, but for Lloyd George the worst had been held off without violence and through some form of discussion with the miners. What would have occurred should the Triple Alliance have stood firm can only be speculated upon, but most certainly it would have forced a government reaction one way or the other.

It therefore becomes more complicated to analyse the factions over these issues. It is clear that the Hardliners remained a powerful force in Cabinet with enough political weight to influence policy, at some points fully dictating it and at the majority of other points pushing the moderates into a middle-way approach. The issues of Russian recognition and the Trade Agreement are the main exceptions and saw Lloyd George and the moderates refusing to budge on their policy; however, there is a big unknown – what would have happened had Rapello not cut short the debate? The signing of an agreement between Russian and Germany effectively ended the debate in Cabinet prematurely, therefore it is impossible to say if the Hardliner pressure would have paid off in the end or if Lloyd George was willing to risk a Cabinet split over the matter or would have made a deal. What is clear is that the Hardliners and moderates were now clearly clashing over the domestic threat of Bolshevism with the factions still identifiable and set apart from the rest of the Cabinet, which was largely silent. While this silent group would vote with Lloyd George, I would again point out that their lack of involvement in these debates shows that it was not due to a political affiliation with the moderates but

instead from a lack of interest and the importance of more mundane factors such as party loyalty, careerism and Cabinet collective responsibility.

The rise of Stanley Baldwin to the position of Prime Minister was the major change in Cabinet dynamics over the issue of Bolshevism. Despite leading the party to what some argued was an unnecessary defeat in 1923, he remained uncontested as leader, going on to fight another, better election a year later. The election of 1924 saw the Conservatives stand on a strong anti-Bolshevik platform, with the campaign largely focused on criticising the Russian treaties, the Campbell case and Zinoviev letter. But despite the hawkish side of the Party being given such a platform, it was Baldwin who was pivotal in the campaign, largely due to the fact that his image as a moderate and a pragmatist gave the Conservative attacks a sense of real legitimacy. The Prime Minister was undoubtedly a moderate when it came to Bolshevism, but he had allowed potentially uncontrollable forces to be unleashed in the hope of electoral victory. New leadership, however, did not end the split between the Hardliners and the moderates, with the 1924 election campaign even spurring on the anti-Bolshevik feeling already so strong in the Party. Joynson-Hicks and Birkenhead were now firmly with the Hardliners and the faction remained a powerful force. This grouping pushed policy in the debates around Union legislation, though Neville Chamberlain, Steel-Maitland and to some extent Amery would all become clear supporters of Baldwin's moderation, and most importantly the rise of Baldwin himself to his position of authority would ensure that the powerful Hardliners still could not dictate policy as they wished. The silent grouping of the now Conservative-only Cabinet is perhaps more engaged from this point onwards in these debates and yet as can be seen are happy to remain outside of the key debates in Cabinet. In all, the political circumstances had certainly changed a great deal and a new Prime Minister led a new Conservative Cabinet; however, the issue of Bolshevism would continue to lead to debates and splits within Cabinet and a strong group of Hardliner members would still push Baldwin’s policy away from the moderation he believed in.

The big confrontation between state and the unions would come in 1926. Within the party, Churchill manoeuvred to be seen as the antithesis of Baldwin and his allies and their plan for negotiation with the miners. It was, as Baldwin declared, a choice for the Cabinet, “between the national strike and the payment of assistance to the mining industry”. Despite vocal opposition, the vote went in the Prime Minister's favour. The Red Friday deal was therefore signed, but within a year the truce had come to an end and new

negotiations began. With the unions continuing to reject terms, Baldwin found himself increasingly isolated. With the strike underway, for Churchill and his allies the best way to ensure victory was through draconian measures. But Baldwin remained adamant, insisting in Cabinet on opposition to the use of excessive force. Despite the debates in the Cabinet, it was soon clear that the months since Red Friday in 1925 had been used well and emergency powers were enacted smoothly. In the end, it was at this final and major clash that the Hardliners' power seemingly failed and the moderates dictated the reaction as they saw fit. This was in part due to the move of the silent majority in Cabinet towards more vocal support of Baldwin's policy of moderation, including the decision by Jix to back away from the Hardliners' rhetoric. Churchill was out of the way working on *The Gazette*, and with Curzon now deceased and other key figures Balfour and Milner uninvolved, the Hardliners' power seemed to have faded.

The moderates in government were both relieved and delighted at the apparent return of reason. They had seen off the strike without unnecessary violence and in doing so had avoided the spectre of revolution and counter-revolution, which had haunted all their minds during the nine days. Baldwin had remained a moderate, had pulled together a number of his Cabinet to help this aim, and had seen off the threat of those Hardliners who opposed him; he had offered the chance for the General Council to surrender and they had taken it, and perhaps most importantly, he had refused to escalate and, perhaps as a result, had saved the nation from bloody class war. However, despite their collapse as a faction during the General Strike, the Hardliners were able to rally together to make a lasting impact on the Baldwin government's policy towards Russia, effectively ending relations in 1927 after the ARCOS Raid. The strength of Joynson-Hicks, Churchill and Birkenhead in pushing for an end to diplomatic relations in the aftermath of this raid was the last key debate within the Cabinet between the factions, with the quite obvious guilt of Russia ending any real chance of the moderates stopping such drastic action against the motivated Hardliners.

Cabinet splits analysed

Firstly and briefly, before the real impact of these splits on policy is analysed, there must be some mention of the apparent leeway given to the Hardliners within the Cabinet. How, for example, was Churchill able to push so hard against his own Prime Minister, repeatedly and without shame, and continue to keep his

Cabinet role? The answer to this would seem to be two-fold: first, in the context of the coalition, his position was strengthened; but more importantly, the dynamics of this particular moment in British politics offered Churchill the chance to act with an impunity unthinkable in steadier times. As one of the government's 'Big Beasts', men like Churchill would always have that little bit more leeway, but at a time in which the Labour Party, emboldened by the Representation of the People Act in 1918, threatened to sweep all before it, the unity and stability of the Liberal/Conservative coalition was never more important. Even more immediate political questions were also important in these decisions. Lloyd George was also pondering a more immediate crisis: would the rise of Labour signal the end of the Liberals? His war-time feud with Asquith had certainly weakened the party and Labour had emerged as a force to be reckoned with across the nation. Maintaining a strong government and avoiding more party splits was therefore of paramount importance.[949] The Conservatives in the coalition were also attempting to adjust to the new realities. Some, like Austen Chamberlain, believed that perpetual coalition was the only answer to Labour, agreeing with Lloyd George that maintaining that it was the only sure way to avoid class conflict. Others though took the approach soon to be delivered by Baldwin, advocating moving the Conservative Party to fight single-handedly against Labour as an anti-Socialist force – a plan the Liberal Prime Minister was surely preoccupied with scuppering.[950] With the ever-growing importance of maintaining the coalition against these new political threats, both internal and external, ensuring that the government remained strong and inclusive against the forces of Socialism was paramount to Lloyd George and Austen Chamberlain. This made it much more difficult for action against individual Cabinet members to be taken that would likely cause a breakdown in coalition and government. Maximising the coalition, keeping everyone inside the tent and keeping it as big as possible, may therefore have been the motive for allowing Churchill and others such leeway. Indeed, it is clear that it was primarily the peculiar dynamics of this political moment that allowed the Hardliners to act with such impunity and remain in the Cabinet and at the forefront of the debate. In such a morbid but uncertain and excitable age, it is perhaps unsurprising that alongside these views were others equally concerning to those in government.

What of Baldwin, then? Do the debates and factions continue into his leadership for the same reasons, and if

949 Cowling, *The Impact of Labour 1920-1924*

950 McKibbin, *Parties and People*

so, how, given that by 1924 he was at the head of a majority rather than a coalition? The answers here are perhaps slightly different when it comes to the intricacies of Westminster politics, but the overall feeling and fears of the age remained similarly important. Baldwin's political weakness and inability to close down such debates rests on three things. The first was the age itself – the uncertainties around new ideological threats, the strength of feeling on them and therefore the need to allow men to air these views. The second was the strength of the characters involved: only a foolhardy man would sack Curzon, Churchill and their allies when the Conservative Party had recently lost for the first time to Labour, when the party was still reeling over the death of Law and the inability of Curzon to win the leadership, and when Churchill had proven himself so popular as to present a real threat from the backbenches. The third was the leadership of Baldwin – his style. A man known to remain quiet during many internal debates, to seek the views of those around him and to decide his own path either due to or away from these arguments, Baldwin was never going to be a leader who cracked down on intra-party debate; indeed, he was never perhaps going to be a leader who cracked down on internal sedition. It was this quality, seen by some colleagues as weakness, that meant the factions remained and the debates continued. Yet, it was also this quality – and here it is apparent that quality is what it was – that helped lead to the dampening of industrial anger during the General Strike and brought Britain back to peaceful normality once again.

It is with this context, that we must look at the debates analysed over the course of this thesis. The fact that such a split in the Cabinet was allowed to exist for almost a decade, with four Prime Ministers (Lloyd George, Law, Baldwin, MacDonald, and again Baldwin) in office over the period, is quite remarkable. What is clear is that, for some in the Cabinet, their position was set. Churchill and Curzon sometimes seemed convinced that any problem, whether domestic or imperial, was best solved by the mobilisation and ruthless deployment of overwhelming force, hence the former's increasing insistence that only war in Russia or at home could end Bolshevism.[951] Lloyd George and later Baldwin, on the other hand, remained convinced that moderation, communication and negotiation would stop industrial unrest becoming Bolshevik. Others were more fluid. Here we see Balfour, Cecil, Joynson-Hicks, Neville Chamberlain, to some extent his half-brother Austen and others, floating from faction to faction depending on the matter in hand. In order to distinguish

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951 Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire;* David E. Omissi, *'Air Power and Colonial Control: The Royal Air Force, 1919–1939'*, Manchester, 1990

and make clear these groups, I have therefore named them on the basis of their attitudes on how to defeat Bolshevism. On the one hand are the Hardliners, Churchill and his allies – those who see strength as the only option against such an alien ideology. On the other side of the argument stand the pragmatists, or moderates – men also against Bolshevism on the whole but aware of the power of negotiation and other means to bring the disillusioned back into the mainstream political fold.

A middle way: The pursuit of moderation by the appeasement of the Hardliners

The debates surrounding Bolshevism and how to deal with it eventually came to an end. By the end of 1927, the issue seemed settled with the General Strike and then the end of recognition of Russia after ARCOS, serving as an obvious last clash between the union, Bolshevism and the government. Overall, it seemed that both sides had seen some success: the strike itself, as with many other clashes over the previous decade, had been settled with discussion and not violence. Baldwin had outlasted the unions and in doing so won the congratulations of the monarch, his own government and indeed the country. The Hardliners too can be seen as successful: finally after years of debate they had ended the British diplomatic relationship with Russia and even regarding the strike, the adoption of many of their ideas had led to a quicker end. The use of volunteers, the work of the OMS, the arrest of major Bolsheviks, the use of the media, and the show of strength from the armed forces had all worked in the government's favour. It is a trend that can be seen throughout the years that this thesis explores – moderate victory overall but only through the adoption of hard-line methods. This thesis shows therefore that throughout this period, a small but important group within Cabinet had a major impact on policy decisions taken on a wide range of Bolshevik-related issues and on the actions of two moderate Prime Ministers – the Hardliners were a small dedicated faction in Cabinet and with the floating support of other Cabinet members remain an important and unresearched factor in the development of interwar politics in Britain.

This is for many the point and the merit of a Cabinet government: a collection of voices coming together to formulate the best approach to policy. What is striking about these Cabinet debates and factions over this issue is that, in spite of the depth of feeling involved, the Cabinet never broke apart. Perhaps the main factor in that was that the Hardliners were not just listened to, but that their opinion was translated into policy

decisions. This was not simply a case of Lloyd George or Stanley Baldwin using Cabinet meetings to air views and then cherry-pick the best; this was, at times, a true clash of ideologies within a Coalition and then Majority Government. On the issue of Bolshevism, it is clear that between Churchill and Lloyd George there lay very little common ground. Instead, these internal debates and factions had served a different purpose; they had never led to the destruction of the Prime Minister's authority but, consciously or subconsciously, they had hardened his approach to the issue of Bolshevism. This was a divide in the Cabinet that did not heal from 1917 until 1927, and only then because the battle it was concerned with had been fought and won. It was also true that the factions, while their key members remained in the Cabinet, were unchanged – there was no fluidity about the approach of the core members. Churchill, Curzon, Joynson-Hicks, Wilson and Birkenhead at no point backed down fully to moderation, and Lloyd George, Austen Chamberlain and Baldwin never adopted the full aggressive espoused by the Hardliners. This trend becomes apparent throughout this thesis, and by looking at the individual clashes and key events, one quickly realises that the relationship between moderates and Hardliners was, in fact, what determined the policy adopted throughout these ten years.

The period of the Lloyd George leadership perhaps saw the biggest clashes between the Hardliners and the moderates within the Cabinet. This is perhaps unsurprising given the coalition itself, the makeup of the men within it and the on-going stresses and threats created by the Great War. The debates from 1917 to 1921 over the issue of intervention in Russia were the first real clashes between these two Cabinet factions, and are a clear example of how the internal debate within the Cabinet was not a block on, but a decider of, the kind of policy that we see throughout the period over Bolshevism. With the moderates arguing for withdrawal and the Hardliners demanding a full invasion of Russia, there seemed to be no avenue of compromise, and yet by appeasing both sides of his Cabinet while maintaining his position as a moderate on the issue, Lloyd George succeeded in finding one. How much he wanted to compromise is difficult to say but as the sources show, his depth of feeling on the matter certainly would point to the conclusion that, against his wishes, his foreign policy had to be changed due to the Hardliners' arguments within Cabinet. It is this middle-way position between Cabinet extremes that came to define his government on the issue of Bolshevism, and that of Baldwin while the Hardliners were still a force in Cabinet. What is also interesting to note is that despite this being the unreferenced stance by both sides, this compromise approach does seem to find the path that, albeit

in retrospect, led successfully between the extremes and succeeded in averting any revolutionary threat. On the issue of intervention, it led to funding the White Russians, a gradual withdrawal from military operations and a relatively benign approach to the hysteria of men like Churchill. For Britain, this resulted in no costly overseas wars, a saving of face in terms of foreign policy, and a chance to gamble on the Whites until the stakes became too high. Allowing some form of compromise also even kept Churchill and Curzon onside, thus keeping the Cabinet together at a vital time.

Domestically, with strikes going on across the country at the same time, we see a similar approach, with the Hardliners craving military action but after long periods of pressure against unwilling leaders, accepting compromises such as negotiation with the prosecution of key agitators. The Clyde, too, is a good measure of this middle way. The Hardliners won large concessions to keep them on side, and troops were called out and key strikers arrested, but the army was held back from excesses and a conciliatory manner of approach to the mass of men on the picket line was adopted, which allowed for calm, leading to the gradual return to work by most men on the river. During the soldier and police strikes, the moderates had more of a say but still had to make some concessions. The army was offered a real deal on demobilisation, though one based on length of time served; meanwhile, in areas where violence was committed, the military police were allowed to detain and prosecute the perpetrators. The police strikes saw concessions across the board but, to keep the Hardliners on side again, a line was drawn, denying official recognition of the Police Union. Throughout this period, we therefore see a continuation of the same policy of moderation with selective appeasement towards the Hardliners within the Cabinet. The result, it could be argued, is the perfect *via media*. The clashes with the left were not handled so weakly as to encourage more unrest and perhaps more extreme rebellion, and at the same time were not met with the kind of excessive aggression that could encourage more violence and a loss of control by the moderates on both sides. However, despite these successes, it again has to be made clear exactly what we are seeing here – the importance of this small group of Hardliners in deciding government reactions to threats against the apparent views of the Prime Minister.

This trend continued in later clashes with the left and in debates surrounding the threat of Bolshevism during Lloyd George’s time in office. The miners' strike showed a return to the middle path by the Prime Minister. Here his natural instincts were to negotiate, seeing the strikes as a reaction to poor wages and working

conditions and not, as the Hardliners believed, the start of a Bolshevik-inspired plot to break the government. Dialogue was begun with the unions and, in the end, it was this conversation, the appeal of the Prime Minister directly to Union leaders and the collapse of the Triple Alliance, that were key to the Black Friday agreement. However, the speed at which a deal was brokered and the strength of the government hand within it all stemmed from Lloyd George allowing the Hardliners a number of important wins in Cabinet. The issuing of Emergency Powers following the demands by Churchill and Curzon, with Wilson a vocal supporter, helped the government cause a great deal, as did recalling troops from Germany with the first of these measures really making a difference on the ground during the strikes and the second providing more of a psychological boost. It is still clear that, with these policies enacted, the position of the government in its negotiation was strengthened. Strikes to Lloyd George were not about Bolshevism, though he clearly believed that, if they were badly managed, it could become a factor. This was in stark contrast to the other faction in his Cabinet, led by Churchill. However, by pursuing his strategy of negotiation through strength, Lloyd George had found a way to appease the Hardliners while pursuing a policy of moderation. It seemed a solid sign that Cabinet Government still worked – even one as divided over the issue of Bolshevism as this one. Perhaps, by this point, the Prime Minister was also showing his political acumen, realising that small concessions would buy off this section of his Cabinet and still allow him to pursue his main aims.

With this idea of Lloyd George getting the measure of this difficult faction, it is interesting that the next two clashes were the exceptions to the middle ground approach, with the moderate Prime Minister refusing to compromise. The fact that neither issue was pushed all the way to a head due to circumstances is looked at in more detail in the final section of this conclusion.

The first of these was Hands Off Russia, where the moderates prevailed over the Hardliners in perhaps every aspect. Indeed, the change in the British government's policy on the Polish-Russian conflict came at the expense of a nation they had helped to exist again in the aftermath of the First World War, despite the rage of the Hardliners and others. Perhaps here some caveats do need to be inserted, though. This movement was not the work of a few hardened left-wing activists; rather, it had the support of the majority of the working-class population. It also arose during the heightened problems with both the military and police, which clearly limited the options available to the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly for

this research, it was not an event or movement that elicited the usual vitriol from the Hardliners in the Cabinet. Churchill was not as active among the backbenchers as usual, while Curzon's anger at the change in foreign policy could be considered partly due his hurt pride as an overruled foreign secretary. Why was this? Perhaps it was due to the circumstances or perhaps because the final clash was never needed. The second exception is the signing of the Russian Trade Agreement in 1921 – a decision which led to great anger in the Cabinet and may have proved the end of the coalition itself had the outside factor of Rapallo not delayed the issue. Lloyd George ignored the anger of the Hardliners, here supported by most Conservatives (including even Austen Chamberlain) and the backbenches, to sign the deal with Russia. Churchill was so incensed that he threatened to resign over the policy and had to be restrained from doing so by Cabinet allies, while Curzon sent letters full of threat to Russia regarding their propaganda campaign at home and throughout the Empire. Had Russia and Germany not come to an agreement, there could have been a breakdown of the Coalition Government over the matter. Lloyd George had not taken the middle way on an issue close to the Hardliners' hearts; no real concessions were granted to them as had been the case in most other situations, and the result was a near-mutiny in the Cabinet. It was an issue, though, that the Prime Minister felt he could not back down from. After years of conflict and economic punishment, Britain desperately needed a resumption of pre-war trade, especially with a nation with the size and influence of Russia. It was a difficult matter to broach to the Cabinet, but it was for Lloyd George of such importance that it could not be ignored due to internal political splits and, as we will see, it is impossible to guess whether a compromise would have occurred at the end as Rapello ensured that it did not get to that point.

Given the personal animosity between Lloyd George and the next man to take the reins, Stanley Baldwin (following the short leadership of Bonar Law, which saw no real clash on the issue of Bolshevism), a change in approach might have taken place. However, this was not to be the case. As discussed, Baldwin was, like Lloyd George, a moderate and a man driven by a desire to unify the nation. He saw the industrial unrest as a symptom of inequality and unfairness in post-war Britain, believing that not only did the men who fought so bravely in the trenches deserve better, but that even without such a conflict there had to be a reconciliation between employer and labour. It was this moderate approach that guided his decision-making during the many clashes between his government and the militant left, ending of course in the General Strike of May 1926. However, much like Lloyd George, Baldwin’s own moderate approach was tempered by the influence

of the Hardliners, who still remained a powerful faction within his Cabinet. Once again, we see a middle way approach adopted by the Prime Minister over the threat of Bolshevism, maintaining at heart his own moderate beliefs but sharpened by Hardliner pressure into a more effective tool. It was a policy of extending the olive branch while keeping the sword firmly in the other hand, and once again it proved an effective compromise. Coming into office in a period of conflict between the government and the hard left, and at a time of great industrial unrest, this stance was to prove a defining feature of the Baldwin government. In the all-Conservative Cabinet, Baldwin had the support of men such as the Chamberlains, Amery and Steel-Maitland. Arrayed against him, however, were a powerful Hardliner faction: the returned Churchill and Curzon, joined by the new Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks and Lord Birkenhead.

Indeed, against such a formidable Hardliner faction, Baldwin initially made his position more difficult, opening something of a Pandora's Box of Bolshevism in his 1924 election campaign. With many already obsessed by the threat that this ideology represented, the Zinoviev letter and Campbell case seemed only to prove that the threat had been there all along. Though it is likely that both were pushed to the fore by Baldwin and Conservative Central Office, who were desperate to avoid electoral defeat against Labour, they certainly made his push for a moderate response to industrial unrest harder to maintain in the years which followed. This also greatly strengthened both the belief and influence of the Hardliners, with men such as Birkenhead and Joynson-Hicks said to revel in the new atmosphere of anti-Bolshevism. Baldwin's gamble paid off in the short term, with electoral victory, but it would make the middle way approach to any apparent Bolshevik threat much harder to maintain going forward. The first test was to come soon after his victory with the miners' deal made by Lloyd George coming to an end in 1925.

Under pressure from the Hardliners to tackle the unions head on, even if that meant a General Strike, Baldwin looked likely to relent. However, after a period of silence, he returned to argue that negotiations should take place, in the end accepting a deal seen by many of his colleagues as a defeat. Baldwin had fiercely made his argument for compromise and finally the decision was made to allow a subsidy of nine months to pacify the miners. However, the Hardliners were not to come out of the debate empty-handed, with Baldwin adopting a similar middle way that had proved so successful for his predecessor. Joynson-Hicks was given new powers to enact the Emergency Legislation prepared for a mass strike, calling up

volunteers and massing supplies, Churchill succeeded in bringing back a number of military divisions from Ireland and the Rhine, and Baldwin was forced to agree that the next clash would have to be met head-on. The Prime Minister had managed to pursue his moderate path with some giveaways to the Hardliners; but, with his position weakened by his Red-scare approach to the 1924 election, he had only done so with the argument that more time was needed to prepare for a General Strike. A middle path had been forged, but, unlike Lloyd George, in doing so Baldwin weakened his hand for the next round of Cabinet debates.

That last real test of Baldwin's Cabinet unity was to come in 1926 with the General Strike. In the build-up and throughout the strike itself, Baldwin still, just, managed to maintain such a middle way. He was able to stop the worst excesses of his Hardliner Cabinet members and maintain dialogue with the unions that would prove eventually fruitful. In the build-up to the strike, however, we do see almost total ascendency by the Hardliners in the Cabinet. By the end of 1925, the Home Secretary was ready for the fight: preparations were finished and the law itself had even been strengthened to deal with unrest. While the Prime Minister had not given up on negotiation, it seemed that his Cabinet had; even men like Neville Chamberlain had joined the Hardliner cause, leaving Baldwin largely without allies at this key moment. It was this strength that allowed them to stop Baldwin's last-ditch attempts at negotiation the night before the strike began, effectively dictating that a clash should occur. However, under pressure from Baldwin and with actual revolution now a possibility, a shift occurred within the Cabinet away from the Hardliners and towards Baldwin. This is best illustrated by the move of even the Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks towards the moderate camp. With this growth in moderate support, Baldwin moved quickly to regain control, moving Churchill to *The Gazette* and effectively isolating him from the main debate. With a strong moderate faction controlling Cabinet and a middle path policy between strong tactics and an approachable moderate in Baldwin, the strike passed without any major flashpoints; indeed, such was the success of the government policy that the Unions came to the negotiating table. The Strike had been beaten, not by force alone or even dialogue, but a combination of the two, and through Baldwin's determination to exhibit the fair and democratic forces of constitutional government.

Perhaps the last example of ARCOS and the end of relations was also the only one in which the moderates were totally out manoeuvred by the Hardliners. Even after the General Strike, the faction had reformed over

the issues of Union Legislation, Bolshevik propaganda and threats to the Empire, and in 1927 their claims were proven with the results of the ARCOS Raid. They demanded an end to relations with Russia and with the facts against them, the backbenchers and membership united behind the Hardliners. With the Home Secretary leading the charge, the moderates were forced to relent. Relations were broken off, trade ceased and with that final apparent total victory, the Hardliners had won their cause.

Throughout this period, splits within the government over the threat of Bolshevism had been a major issue for both Lloyd George and Stanley Baldwin, and yet, as this thesis shows, the adoption of a middle way through Hardliner pressure or political acumen had proved enough to maintain unity and overcome the external threat. It remains in the realm of conjecture to wonder what would have occurred had either of the two Cabinet factions, Hardliners and moderates, been able to assume full control during these years. It seems likely that the former could have led to much more violence on the streets of Britain, and perhaps even a real attempt to overthrow the government by a strengthened Bolshevik movement, while the latter could have seen disproportionately strong unions and a weakened democratic government. Neither is an appealing thought. The middle way had succeeded in allowing naturally moderate Prime Ministers to control potentially more hardline Cabinets. It had avoided provoking the working classes and the political left, but had ensured that any clashes were dealt with effectively and with some strength. It is perhaps also a sign of the importance and benefits of a true Cabinet government in the British tradition and a return from the widely criticised style of Lloyd George as a presidential politician. It was a ten-year period of Cabinet blessed with strong and influential figures. It was this strength that led to the splits that this thesis analyses, but it was this strength that also led to a true Cabinet approach to the issues of the day and led to two successive Prime Ministers taking an effective middle way. It was that approach which ensured the maintenance of both a coalition and a Conservative Government and helped to ensure that the threat of Bolshevism in Britain never came seriously close to being realised.

The contingency factor

Lastly, and as an addition to the above conclusions, it is also worth noting that for both Lloyd George and Baldwin, luck played a large role in keeping their Cabinets united and them in the top job. Examples of this luck can be seen in a number of the key flash points that this thesis has covered, with these contingencies often helping the Prime Minister keep the moderate forces of his Cabinet in the ascendency, or otherwise actually working to end a major point of debate. For Lloyd George, the first of these lucky escapes came during the debates surrounding intervention within Russia – an issue that had led to a split within his Cabinet and saw Churchill riding roughshod over Cabinet collective responsibility and earning adoration from the backbenches for doing so. With the two factions deadlocked over the way in which men and money would continue to be offered to help the White Russian generals, it was the latter's collapse within Russia that effectively ended any chance of intervention. With Churchill's hopes pinned on Denikin, the collapse of his forces came as a shock to the Hardliners within the government and allowed Lloyd George and Chamberlain to take control of the debate, eventually leading to the total withdrawal of British forces from Russia and the cessation of all White Russian funding. The next stroke of luck for the Prime Minister and the moderates came in 1920 with Poland's victory on the Vistula against Bolshevik forces. It was this tide-turning moment in the conflict that ended the pressure on Lloyd George to act against the will of the Hands Off Russia movement and send troops to Poland – something that could well have led to mass unrest and potentially the collapse of his government; again he was saved by forces outside of his control.

Contingency would play a part twice more during Lloyd George's time in office, firstly with the events that led to the collapse of the first major miners' strike of his tenure in 1921. This was a situation that looked likely to morph from localised unrest into a nationwide strike – something that had led the Hardliners within the Cabinet to push for troop deployment and a strong response, largely due to their fear that it could quickly evolve from a strike to a revolution. This threat was never realised due to a major factor outside of the government's control – the failure of the Triple Alliance to come out in sympathy with the miners. The reasons for this collapse in solidarity are many, but importantly for Lloyd George and the Cabinet, in refusing to join the strike, any real threat was effectively ended. Had the Triple Alliance joined their comrades on the picket lines, the push from the Hardliners for action, the continued divides within the

government and the potential for a spiralling of events would have been very real, which would have posed a very real threat to both domestic security and the unity of the Cabinet.

Lastly, but perhaps most fortunately, were the events surrounding the controversial decision taken by Lloyd George to push through the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement – a policy decision that was the most likely of his premiership to lead to a collapse of his coalition over the issue of Bolshevism. With the Cabinet in open revolt at the idea of signing such a deal with Russia, Lloyd George was under huge pressure to withdraw from trade negotiations with the Russians or face down the majority of Cabinet conservatives, Winston Churchill and huge numbers of his coalitions backbenchers, with Curzon and Churchill both going so far to threaten resignation over the matter. In the end, however, Lloyd George was freed from any such decisions by events out of his control occurring in central Europe – the secret negotiation and signing of the Treaty of Rapallo by the German and Russian Governments. This treaty ended the possibility of a Anglo-Soviet alternative and allowed Lloyd George to step away from the precipice without losing face or his coalition partners in the process.

The importance of contingency in maintaining Cabinet unity and avoiding domestic unrest morphing into something much more dangerous continued with Baldwin's rise to the leadership of the Conservative Party and on to Prime Minister. The very fact that Stanley Baldwin rose to his eventual position was owed in large part to luck, with the more obvious candidates hampered by a range of issues. Lord Curzon's position in the House of Lords was a major stumbling block – a factor that played a part in Law, Balfour and the King's wariness about appointing him to the premiership, while Baldwin's other main rival, Austen Chamberlain, had lost his position through his support for the Lloyd George Coalition – a key issue of the day – and subsequently remained in political wilderness until January 1924. These factors, combined with the defeat of Churchill in the 1923 election debacle, the on-going rifts in the Conservative Party over a number of emotive issues, and the lack of other credible candidates all also played a huge part in ensuring that Baldwin held onto power and was able to fight a second election as leader of the Party. It is perhaps in the election of 1924 that the biggest piece of luck fell into Baldwin's lap with the emergence of apparent Bolshevik-inspired plots while the campaign was in full swing. Though the authenticity of the Zinoviev letter was questioned at the time, and was later found to be a forgery originating in Poland, upon its release in the *Daily Mail* it proved

devastating for the Labour party's election campaign, effectively ensuring that Baldwin would win. Not only this, but the writings and trial of J. R. Campbell on charges of incitement to mutiny also played into the hands of a Conservative election machine focused on discrediting Labour, highlighting its links with extremists and claiming that a real threat of revolution now existed within Great Britain. Baldwin was to win a landslide and in doing so cement his position within the Conservative Party and as Prime Minister, in no small part due to these contingencies.

The Gap Filled

As was discussed in the introduction there are a number of areas in which this thesis is filling a gap in the available research available on the period. There are a wide range of sources available on the figures and politics of the interwar period and in some instances on specific events, however this work is original in its focus and approach. No in depth research currently exists looking specifically at the splits that occurred with the Coalition and Conservative Cabinet over the way in which to approach the threat of Bolshevism during this ten year period. None also explore the factions, divides and debates that occurred within Cabinet as a result. It is also true that no research currently has addressed the impact that these divides and this debate had on the formulation of policy by Lloyd George, Stanley Baldwin and to some limited extent Bonar Law and how the influencers within the Cabinet on both sides led to these.

The impact of the splits on Bolshevism has often been underrated and instead of looking at the overall picture many of the existing studies take specific events as their focus. In terms of the period as a whole the majority of available sources look at the key figures as individuals, the parties themselves and on other policy areas such as appeasement, the financial crisis, domestic fascism, home rule and decolonoalisation for example. The issue of Bolshevism on the thinking of the Liberals and Conservatives has been largely unexplored, except perhaps when discussing the election of 1924. The majority of secondary sources fall into these categories or have a much narrower focus and different perspective. For example many look at the General Strike but not the wider debates over the decade either side, or from a Cabinet perspective, nor even from a party political one. The same is true of the books on the other key clashes of the period that involved

Bolshevism, the Clydesiders for example, the ARCOS raid or the Demobilisation Strikes. Other key literature is much more military focused, especially the books looking at the allied Intervention in Russia which are largely looking at the operations on the ground – although they do show the way in which debates in Westminster impacted these military decisions there is no real exploration of the impact this had on the balance of Coalition politics nor on the Cabinets deeper divide on the matter.

This Thesis therefore fills this gap and offer the first detailed look at the Coalition and Conservative Cabinets and how they debated and factionalised over the threat of Bolshevism to the UK between 1917 and 1927. It shows the progression of these debates from the Russian Revolution right through until the end of relations with Russia in 1927 and details who was involved and the outcomes of them with regard to the key flash points of the decade. This also offers the first real analyses of the groupings that formed in the Cabinets as a result of these debates, groups that I have termed the Hardliners, Moderates and Silent factions. This thesis looks at the fluid membership of these groups, the way they developed, the key figures within them and their reasoning and argument in the key clashes of the period. It then also fills a gap by explaining the way in which the formation of these cabinet factions actually influenced the decision making and even policy of the Prime Ministers in questions and therefore made a lasting impact on the way in which events were dealt with and the consequences seen.

The Coalition and Conservative Cabinet perspective in unique in exploring the issue of Bolshevism in the interwar period, as is the decision to look at these debates over a ten year period and not in reference to just one major event. Research does exist from a left wing perspective on the issue of domestic Bolshevism, be that in terms of the Communist Party, other far left groups, the relationship between Russia and the working class movements or the Labour Government itself, but none looks at the impact on the Liberals and Conseevatives. Other work also looks at just key points, sometimes exploring the Coalition/Conservative Cabinet debates, but with no attempt to analyse these arguments in the context of the ongoing clash that occurred over this entire decade. There I believe that this offers a new perspective to the way in which policy was formulated over the issue of Bolshevism, looking at the gradual creation of these factions over the years following the Russian Revolution and exploring the way in which this gradually effects Cabinet decisions and subsequently policy.

I believe that this is an important and unrepresented area in understanding the internal workings and policy decisions of the Coalition Government and then the Conservative administrations during this ten year period and that this work fills that gap. This thesis therefore offers an exploration of these events and analyses the way in which the threat of Bolshevism impacted on the Cabinet in terms of individuals, groupings and ultimately policy decisions. It is offering new insight into the way in which the issue of Bolshevism creating these cabinet groupings and how this developed over the period. Lastly it shows that these splits did impact the way in which the Prime Ministers in this period dealt with the threats that emerged around domestic unrest and that these debates did therefore have an impact on the government policy domestically and even internationally when it came to relations with Russia.

Appendix 1: Cabinet and faction members

Lloyd George Coalition Government

War Cabinet, December from November 1917 – January 1919

- Lord Curzon of Kedleston – Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Lords
- Bonar Law – Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons
- Arthur Henderson – Minister without Portfolio (Labour)
- Lord Milner – Minister without Portfolio

The 1917 Imperial War Cabinet

- June 1917 – Jan Smuts enters the War Cabinet as a Minister without Portfolio
- July 1917 **-** January 1918 – Sir Edward Carson enters the War Cabinet as a Minister without Portfolio,
- August 1917 – George Barnes succeeds Arthur Henderson (resigned) as Minister without Portfolio and Labour Party member of the War Cabinet.
- April 1918 – Austen Chamberlain succeeds Lord Milner as Minister without Portfolio.
- January 1919 – Law becomes Lord Privy Seal, remaining Leader of the House of Commons, and is succeeded as Chancellor of the Exchequer by Chamberlain, both remaining in the War Cabinet. Smuts is succeeded by Sir Eric Geddes as Minister without Portfolio.

Peacetime Cabinet, January 1919 – October 1922

Note: The War Cabinet was formally maintained for much of 1919, but as Lloyd George was out of the country for many months, this made little difference. In October 1919, a formal Cabinet was reinstated.

- David Lloyd George – Prime Minister

- Lord Birkenhead – Lord Chancellor
- Lord Curzon of Kedleston – Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Lords
- Bonar Law – Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons
- Austen Chamberlain – Chancellor of the Exchequer
- Edward Shortt – Secretary of State for the Home Department
- Arthur Balfour – Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
- Lord Milner – Secretary of State for the Colonies
- Winston Churchill – Secretary of State for War and Air
- Edwin Samuel Montagu – Secretary of State for India
- Walter Hume Long – First Lord of the Admiralty
- Sir Albert Stanley – President of the Board of Trade
- Robert Munro – Secretary for Scotland
- James Ian Macpherson – Chief Secretary for Ireland
- Lord French – Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland
- Christopher Addison – President of the Local Government Board
- Rowland Edmund Prothero – President of the Board of Agriculture
- Herbert Fisher – President of the Board of Education
- Lord Inverforth – Minister of Munitions
- Sir Robert Horne – Minister of Labour
- George Nicoll Barnes – Minister without Portfolio
- Sir Eric Geddes – Minister without Portfolio
- Field Marshall Wilson – Chief of the General Staff in the British Army and sat in on Cabinet. (Did not sit in all Cabinet Meetings, only selected ones when his attendance was relevant to the agenda, and only during his term as Chief of Imperial General Staff, February 1918-February 1922.

Changes of note for this thesis

- May 1919 – Sir Auckland Geddes succeeds Sir Albert Stanley as President of the Board of Trade. Sir

Eric Geddes becomes Minister of Transport.

- October 1919 – Lord Curzon of Kedleston succeeds Balfour as Foreign Secretary. Balfour succeeds Curzon as Lord President. The Local Government Board is abolished. Christopher Addison becomes Minister of Health. The Board of Agriculture is abolished. Lord Lee of Fareham becomes Minister of Agriculture. Sir Eric Geddes becomes Minister of Transport.
- March 1920 – Sir Robert Horne succeeds Sir Auckland Geddes as President of the Board of Trade. Thomas James McNamara succeeds Horne as Minister of Labour.
- Sir Laming Worthington-Evans joins the Cabinet as Minister without Portfolio.
- February 1921 – Winston Churchill succeeds Lord Milner as Colonial Secretary. Sir Laming Worthington-Evans succeeds Churchill as War Secretary.
- March 1921 – Austen Chamberlain succeeds Bonar Law as Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the Commons. Sir Robert Horne succeeds Chamberlain at the Exchequer. Stanley Baldwin succeeds Horne at the Board of Trade.
- April 1921 – The Ministry of Munitions is abolished.
- November 1921 – Sir Eric Geddes resigns from the Cabinet.
- March 1922 – Lord Peel succeeds Edwin Montagu as India Secretary.

Key Hardliners

- Winston Churchill
- Lord Curzon
- Field Marshall Wilson

Sympathetic to the Hardliners

- Arthur Balfour
- Lord Milner

- Lord Birkenhead
- Robert Munro
- Sir Eric Geddes

Key Moderates

- David Lloyd George
- Austen Chamberlain
- Bonar Law
- Edward Shortt
- Edwin Samuel Montague
- Herbert Fisher

Stanley Baldwin Governments

Baldwin's Cabinet, May 1923 – January 1924

- Stanley Baldwin – Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons
- Lord Cave – Lord Chancellor
- Lord Salisbury – Lord President of the Council
- Lord Robert Cecil – Lord Privy Seal
- William Clive Bridgeman – Home Secretary
- Lord Curzon of Kedleston – Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Leader of the House of Lords
- The Duke of Devonshire – Secretary of State for the Colonies
- Lord Derby – Secretary of State for War
- Lord Peel – Secretary of State for India
- Sir Samuel Hoare – Secretary of State for Air

- Lord Novar – Secretary for Scotland
- Leo Amery – First Lord of the Admiralty
- Sir Philip Lloyd-Greame – President of the Board of Trade
- Sir Robert Sanders – Minister of Agriculture
- Edward Frederick Lindley Wood – President of the Board of Education
- Sir Anderson Montague-Barlow – Minister of Labour
- Neville Chamberlain – Minister of Health
- Sir William Joynson-Hicks – Financial Secretary to the Treasury
- Sir Laming Worthington-Evans – Postmaster-General

Baldwin's Cabinet, November 1924 – June 1929

- Stanley Baldwin – Prime Minister and Leader of the House of Commons
- Lord Cave – Lord Chancellor
- Lord Curzon of Kedleston – Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Lords
- Lord Salisbury – Lord Privy Seal
- Winston Churchill – Chancellor of the Exchequer
- Sir William Joynson-Hicks – Home Secretary
- Sir Austen Chamberlain – Foreign Secretary and Deputy Leader of the House of Commons
- Leo Amery – Colonial Secretary
- Sir Laming Worthington-Evans – Secretary of State for War
- Lord Birkenhead – Secretary of State for India
- Sir Samuel Hoare – Secretary for Air
- Sir John Gilmour – Secretary for Scotland
- William Clive Bridgeman – First Lord of the Admiralty
- Lord Cecil of Chelwood – Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
- Sir Philip Cunliffe-Liste – President of the Board of Trade
- Edward Frederick Lindley Wood – Minister of Agriculture

- Lord Eustace Percy – President of the Board of Education
- Lord Peel – First Commissioner of Works
- Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland – Minister of Labour
- Neville Chamberlain – Minister of Health
- Sir Douglas Hogg – Attorney-General

Changes of note

- April 1925 – On Curzon's death, Lord Balfour succeeded him as Lord President. Lord Salisbury became the new Leader of the House of Lords, remaining also Lord Privy Seal.
- June 1925 – The post of Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs was created, held by Leo Amery in tandem with Secretary of State for the Colonies.
- November 1925 – Walter Guinness succeeded E. F. L. Wood as Minister of Agriculture.
- October 1928 – Lord Peel succeeded Lord Birkenhead as Secretary of State for India.

Key Hardliners

- Winston Churchill (despite his period of absence)
- Lord Curzon
- Lord Birkenhead
- William Joynson-Hicks
- Sir Laming Worthington-Evans

Sympathetic to the Hardliners

- Lord Robert Cecil
- Lord Balfour
- Lord Peel

Key Moderates

- Stanley Baldwin
- Austen Chamberlain
- Neville Chamberlain
- Lord Cave
- Arthur Steel-Maitland

Appendix 2: Selection of key figures - potential influences

This section lists the key Hardliners and Moderates and gives some background to the men and their beliefs, exploring their upbringing, early influences, family, position in society, political career and views among other factors to try and build up a profile. Given the wealth of material available on each of these men, as discussed in the literature section of this document, these profiles are focused only on those factors that may have influenced their positioning on Bolshevism and, unlike the rest of this thesis, relies primarily (though not exclusively) on secondary sources. Looking at the key Moderates and Hardliners as well as two men, Milner and Balfour, whose role as likely Hardliners who in the end bent to the Moderates arguments, this appendix is intended to inform the reader of some of the factors that could have weighed on the Cabinet during these important debates.

Winston Churchill

The key figure for the Hardliners throughout the decade covered by this thesis, Winston Churchill, would represent the most ardent anti-Bolshevik and militant member of the Cabinet over the issue of Bolshevism both at home and abroad. His aristocratic background, imperialist views, strong sense of purpose, devotion to the British institutions of royalty, law and democracy, and political background all played a part in his strong views on the matter. Under Lloyd George, Churchill, a Liberal, would serve in Cabinet as Minister of Munitions, Secretary of State for War and Secretary of State for the Colonies. In all of these roles, he would push for action against Russia itself and strong reactions against any unrest in Britain that was seemingly influenced by Bolshevism. With the rise of Stanley Baldwin and Churchill's move back to the Tories, he would become Chancellor, and in this key role would exert his Hardliner views on colleagues throughout the build-up and action of the General Strike itself and the subsequent end of relations with Russia in 1927. Such was the strength of Churchill's hardline views that some have argued that the critical event of the period for him was not the end of war but the Russian Revolution; it gripped his mind obsessionally.[952] Even Lloyd George was quick to note the way in which Churchill took to the issue: “Winston is obsessed by the defeat

[952] O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity*, p.184

inflicted upon his military projects by the Bolshevik armies"[953] But as we have noted perhaps that this passionate anger is to be expected – as a believer in traditional institutions, Churchill was deeply upset by the upheaval of the regime, church, civil service, military, aristocracy and monarchy that Bolshevism represented.

The son of Randolph Churchill, Winston Churchill came from an aristocratic family and was brought up in a traditional way. From an early age, he was taught to cherish the British imperial system, spending time in India as a young man and making early links with his future Cabinet ally, Curzon, on a visit in 1899.[954] His outlook was clear – that Britain had inherited the world by right and by virtue of her superior powers, but that with this came the responsibility to defend it as the representative of advanced and sophisticated civilisation against "the unpenetrated gloom of barbarism".[955] On Home Rule, he started life as a hard unionist, and despite softening his views when joining the Liberals, it seemed to remain his gut instinct on Ireland – something that helped bond his close friendship with Birkenhead.[956] Churchill's military background had a big impact on his world view and his actions as a Hardliner. His admiration of Empire and British power, his heroism in the Boer War, and later his actions in WW1 all showed a distinct character trait. As Rose states, he was unceasing in his search for military glory, explaining his endless interference in the affairs of high strategy and tactics. This stood out in his arguments for Russian Intervention, and also of course in the disaster of the Dardanelles.[957]

Churchill's notion of intervention can also be seen as a continuation of the tenet of British foreign policy, especially as a descendant of Marlborough, that armed intervention was necessary in Europe to address the balance of powers and maintain the status quo.[958] Rose states that Churchill showed no flexibility of thought, would not admit when he was wrong, and disliked criticism. No setback would stop him from believing that he was correct and could find a solution. He saw himself as a romantic adventurer, warrior and above all else

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953 Kinvig, *Churchills Crusade*, p. 21
954 Rose, Churchill, p. 40
955 Rose, Churchill, p. 40
956 Rose, Churchill, p. 93
957 Rose, Churchill, p. 113
958 Rose, Churchill, p. 148

a man destined for greatness.[959] Such was his intransigence that it was here that Lloyd George pondered if it was bordering on the genetic, wondering if "his ducal blood revolted against the wholesale elimination of the Grand Dukes in Russia."[960] Though a basic explanation, it does seem likely that the destruction of the Russian aristocracy and royalty by the Bolsheviks would have had an impact on a man with Churchill's background. Not only would he have been likely to see the contrasts with his own family, he would have understood the threat that the ideology meant to his way of life and that of the people closest to him.

His view of the working classes is also important to note. Even from 1908, Churchill was aware of the potential problems of the growing and political working classes. Claiming the title of social reformer, he sought to address the issues that led to mass poverty. His approach, however, was one of paternalism: he was an aristocrat and, as Clementine would tell Lord Moran, knew "nothing of the life of ordinary people" – something confirmed by the diaries of his Private Secretary of the time, Edward Marsh.[961] Even at this stage, Churchill was deeply alarmed and angered by the revolutionary talk of working class militants such as Charles Masterman.[962] At Dundee in May 1908, he first equated the issue of poverty with that of dangerous socialism: "Socialism seeks to pull down wealth... Socialism would kill enterprise…Socialism attacks capital".[963] Another early example of this anger at the forces that would bring down the system he lived by can be seen in 1910 when as Home Secretary he attended the siege of a building in London taken over by anarchist revolutionaries and instructed the fire brigade to allow the house, with them still inside, to burn down.[964] This anger was perhaps cemented by the widespread strikes of 1911. Here he became convinced that militant Trade Unionism and the politics that lay behind it were forces that threatened class conflict and breakdown of the world's social and economic order.[965] He claimed here that Britain faced a new peril and, had the unrest not been stopped, "it would have hurled the whole of that great community into an abyss of horror… absolute starvation… revolution".[966]

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959 Rose, *Churchill*, 165
960 David Lloyd George, *the Truth About The Peace Treaties*, London, 1938, vol. I, p. 325
961 Edward Marsh, *A Number of People: A Book of Reminiscences*, 1939, p.150
962 Lord Birkenhead, *Contemporary Personalities*, 1924, p. 116
963 W. Churchill, The People's Rights: Collected Speeches, Budget Issues, London, 1970, p. 150-52
964 Rose, *Churchill*, p.77
965 Rose, *Churchill*, p.78
966 Churchill, World in Crisis, p. 381-3

Just as he would later in the General Strike, Churchill stated that troops could use their officers' own discretion to confront the strikers. At the end of the strike, he lamented to Lloyd George that compromise had been a mistake and that the battle should have been fought to the end.[967] What is clear is that this new threat was seen by Churchill as alien to his social contract. He could understand civil reform, provided it was a government-led affair; he could not, however, stand by and allow dictates from below that threatened the social order he believed in as necessary for society.[968] It was, as Leo Amery saw it, an event which saw Churchill assume the mantle of defender of Britain from militant leftism and a man willing to beat down such threats with any weapon that came to hand.[969] Churchill believed that Britain was the nation "most fearing Bolshevism" and that it had the most to lose.[970] For him and other Hardliners and Conservatives, it was a system in direct conflict with their own ideology: commitment to parliamentary governance, the force of law, upholding social order, and private property. As the *Morning Post* said, it "is clean contrary to every conservative principle and sentiment."[971]

In 1918/1919, the threat also seemed to be coming from within, with the advance of Labour seen as the same threat. Hardliners on the issue, such as Churchill, declared that the two were the same threat: "The Labour Party (is) a class party, led by class leaders and fighting the battle of class interests."[972] The threat of the Trade Unions and Triple Alliance was to him, and to many others, another even more militant section of the same overall movement of anarchism and Bolshevism.[973] Labour, Churchill believed, had "bowed down before the Russian idol".[974]

Churchill's views on Empire and Britain's place in the world are also important to understand. If Churchill could have frozen the Empire as it was when he first experienced it, he would have done so. From his time as Colonial Secretary, he became aware of the fragile bonds holding the British Empire together and of those

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967 Rose, *Churchill*, 79
968 Rose, *Churchill*, 79
969 Leo Amery, Diaries, p. 595
970 Churchill to Curzon, 28 August 1920, M Gilber, Churchill 1917-1922, vol. IV, part II, London, 1975, p. 1188
971 Morning Post, 28 March 1922
972 Churchill in Dundee Speech quoted in The Times, 14 February 1920
973 Rose, *Conservationism and FP during the Lloyd George Coalition 1918-1922*, p. 205
974 Quoted in the Times, 7 August 1920

forces that sought to weaken and destroy it; in this, Bolshevism was to become the one he despised most.[975] He wrote, "A worldwide conspiracy [against the Empire] they will not succeed, we will not allow ourselves to be pulled down and have our Empire disrupted by a malevolent and subversive force, the rascals and rapscallions of mankind who are now on the move against us."[976] During the war, the collapse of the Great Empires he had believed so constant had deeply shocked him. At home, the changes in society too worried him, and in his mind he conflated the rise of working-class politics and class conflict all with Bolshevism and what had happened in Russia. It seems that Churchill did see something unique about the threat posed by this new Russian ideology, with its aims to spread across Europe and the world; its attempts to undermine and spread into Empire; and its rise in nations across Western and Eastern Europe. Perhaps a real fear existed that this new threat would combine with the new anger among the British working class at the war, living conditions and society and who were already more political and unionised than at any other point in history. He also saw a threat in Ireland, where political rebels were already fighting back against the state. Was this the same? Was it Bolshevism? His obsession with Russia brought a number of political costs for Churchill. It opened a wider chasm between him and his Liberal Party colleagues and angered his Prime Minister. It also firmed up existing doubts about his temperament and decision making, supporting a view of military adventurism formed at Gallopili. With the occurrence of the Russian Revolution, Churchill spent a great deal of his time and energy trying to stiffen resolve around confronting this new threat, but faced a nation unwilling to fight a new war, and a Prime Minister and allies well aware of the social and financial risks of doing so.

By 1919, the Russian question entirely consumed Churchill. By this point, he was uncomfortable in the Liberal ranks; it also offered him a way back in with Conservative Backbenchers – indeed a Cowlingite argument could suggest that this was part of a wider plan to win back favour from the party he had so unceremoniously left. In any case, Churchill soon became a figurehead and won over the Conservative backbenchers, members and the press by leading their hate of Bolshevism. It could also be said that it allowed him to flex his muscles in the Cabinet, gaining the support of other key figures, clashing with the PM, and asserting himself again as a big beast. However, it does seem that Churchill saw the Bolsheviks as a

[975] Rose, *Churchill*,p. 153 and Paul Addison, *Churchill on the Home Front 1900 – 1955*, p. 369
[976] Rose, citing *CSWC*, 111, 3024-6

real and present threat to Britain and the World by 1919, and also to western society and the class structure in which he occupied a high position. He was also firmly of the view, perhaps due to his classical training on the fall of empires – Rome paying off the Huns for example – that the only way to stop potential aggressors was not through negotiation but action and war.

It seems true that Churchill believed that peace could only possibly be sought from a position of power – one that limited or large-scale intervention could achieve. He was also a man who would brush off information that contradicted his views; this can be seen in his failures in the First World War, but also of course in his success in the second. He was stubborn and impossible to convince against his convictions. As Atlee said of him with regard to WW2, but which could stand for any point of his career, "Rather than have access to information that might cause him to change his mind about something, Winston would sometimes prefer to be left in ignorance."[977] It was, however, his pathological dislike of Bolshevism and a set of decisions in this debate that set up his position for the years to come. To those on the right, he was a phoenix arisen from the ashes and was able to re-court backbench support as an anti-Bolshevik. To his detractors and the moderates, he was reckless and a warmonger. To the left, he was an enemy. To Lloyd George and later Baldwin, he was a serial rebel who had pushed the boundaries of Cabinet and remained in place. What is certainly true is that Churchill was to never shrink back on the issue of Bolshevism from the point of the revolution until 1927.

Lloyd George

The key moderate in the Cabinet alongside Austen Chamberlain, and the Prime Minister and final decision-maker until he left office in 1922, Lloyd George was a giant in the debates on Bolshevism between 1917 and 1927. A Liberal and a Welshman, his views and background were very different to those of most of his Cabinet colleagues, as were the influences that led to his position as a moderate and pragmatist in the debates on domestic unrest and international Bolshevism throughout his tenure as Prime Minister. Having previously served as Chancellor, Secretary of State for War and Minister of Munitions, Lloyd George was experienced in politics and, in representing Caenarfon Boroughs, was more aware than most of the struggles many working-class families were going through.

[977] Kinvig, *Churchills Crusade*, p.19

Perhaps before we explore the other factors that may have led to his moderate policy on these matters, we must acknowledge one that is overriding: Lloyd George, throughout the debates on Bolshevism in this period, was either Prime Minister or not in the Cabinet, and while Prime Minister he was focused on the First World War, the subsequent Peace Talks in France and a myriad of matters that were of great importance to him, the coalition and the nation. Unlike some of the Hardliners who would obsess and focus all of their attention on the threat of Bolshevism, Lloyd George instead had to juggle many important areas and ensure that no action was taken domestically or internationally that the state and he politically could not afford, whether that be financially, socially or politically. It is perhaps this single and vital fact that he was the most senior of all in Cabinet that explains best why Lloyd George remained a moderate and pragmatic leader when it came to Bolshevism, domestic unrest and the threat of Russia to Empire.

Domestically, Lloyd George was acutely aware of the unrest that seethed through the working populations and the deep dissatisfaction with pay, working and living conditions that was leading to strikes and unrest. He was also aware of the public appetite for peace and the financial difficulties that four years of total war had meant for Britain. These were factors that, combined with his background, personal and political influences, combined to ensure that he would champion the moderate path, seek to unify his population and rebuild a shattered nation.

Lloyd George's background, when combined with the circumstances of his leadership, is highly important, with the influence of his childhood showing through in his entire career. Brought up in Wales to a family with a moderate income, he sought from an early point in his political career to sympathise with and aid the common man.[978] This can be seen throughout his career and his early following of men such as Thomas Spence, John Stuart Mill and Henry George, as well as his interest in pamphlets written by George Bernard Shaw and Sidney Webb of the Fabian Society on the issue of land ownership. All would have a great effect on his political views as a politician and as Prime Minister.[979] Entering Cabinet in 1905 as President of the Board of Trade, Lloyd George worked to end the strikes afflicting British industry. His approach was one of

[978] Roy Hattersley, *Go for Joe. David Lloyd George: The Great Outsider.* London, 2010. p.119
[979] Travis Crosby, *The Unknown David Lloyd George: A Statesman in Conflict*, London, 2014, p. 425

moderation and compromise, stopping a proposed national strike of the railway unions by brokering an agreement between the unions and the railway companies. He supported the union's wishes to have elected workers representing the staff on conciliation boards – an early sign of his approach to industrial unrest.[980] In 1909, while Chancellor, his 'Peoples Budget' brought in new taxes for landowners and attempted to redistribute wealth and help those at the lower end of society – again a clear indication of how he viewed the class issues of the time and of his moderation and understanding of the very issues that would cause such debate during his time as Prime Minister.[981]

In terms of foreign policy, Lloyd George was also very different from those who would represent the hard-liners. His role as war leader showed his qualities, patriotism and belief in Britain and its Empire but he was not an imperialist of the same order as Curzon, for example. Indeed, he was often thought of by his detractors as a Little Englander. In truth he was not – he was proud of the good qualities of the British Empire and of Britain's role in the world, yet he believed that self-determination was important, stating, for example, in Birkenhead in 1901 that Empire must be based on freedom, including for India – not "racial arrogance".[982] Consequently, Lloyd George gained national fame by displaying vehement opposition to the Second Boer War.[983] Both of these views set him apart from the Hardliners as a man who was not afraid to call out the unjustness of Empire and who was not blindly patriotic in his support of armed conflict and the use of force to pursue British foreign policy. This is of great help when seeking to understand his position as a moderate and draws clear parallels with his objection to the use of military force within Russia to combat Bolshevism and perhaps his understanding, especially when compared to Churchill, of the factors that led the Bolsheviks to power in the first place – among them serfdom, abject poverty, the unfair wealth of the Tsars and aristocrats of Russia. Lloyd George would later say when pressed on his lack of belief in intervention that the Russians had to decide for themselves and that propping up an unpopular White Russian government would only serve to increase support for the Bolsheviks. As he clarified, "Our principle ought to be 'Russia must save herself!' – nothing else would be of the slightest use to her."[984]

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980 Crosby, *Lloyd George*, p. 68
981 Ramsden, *Appetite for Power*, p. 98
982 Grigg, *Lloyd George*, p. 61
983 Hattersley, *Go for Joe. David Lloyd George*, pp.119–144.
984 Papers of Philip Kerr, 11th Marquis of Lothian, Lothian Muniments, National Archives of Scotland, DLG to Philip Kerr, 19 Feb. 1919

Perhaps Lloyd George's lack of religious conviction also softened the blow caused to many by the Bolsheviks' treatment of Orthodoxy and its churches. Though raised a devout evangelical as a young man, he described losing his faith and became "a deist and perhaps an agnostic, though he remained a chapel-goer and connoisseur of good preaching all his life".[985] Once Prime Minister, and even under the pressure of war, he realised that the unrest obvious within the working classes was not due to disloyalty or Bolshevism but instead due to grievances, ranging from the high cost of living and inadequate housing to the dilution of beer. Despite understanding the causes, Lloyd George was no fan of the revolution sweeping Russia – he realised the danger it represented. As he would state, the Russian Revolution "lit up the skies with a lurid flash of hope for all who were dissatisfied with the existing order of society... (and) encouraged all the habitual malcontents in the ranks of labour to foment discord."[986] It was not the danger but the reaction that would define him as a clear moderate; he had good faith in the patriotism of the British labour leadership and felt that the Labour Party could be relied upon to stand firm against Bolshevism. He also thought that large-scale intervention would stimulate left wing extremism at home. Churchill, he claimed to Riddell, wanted to conduct a war against the Bolsheviks: "That would cause a revolution!"[987]

Stanley Baldwin

Leader of the Conservative Party from the summer of 1923 and Prime Minister twice during this period, 1923-1924 and 1924-1929, Stanley Baldwin sits alongside Lloyd George as one of the key moderates of the decade. With the debates around Bolshevism reaching their zenith with the General Strike in 1926, Baldwin was to oversee some of the bitterest clashes within the Cabinet over the threat of domestic Bolshevism, and to lead a pragmatic moderate grouping within government to ensure that the unrest afflicting the nation was never allowed to spiral out of control and into revolution.

Before rising to become Prime Minister, Baldwin cut his teeth in government in a number of roles, including as President of the Board of Trade and Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was at heart a pragmatist and

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985 D.M. Cregier, , Bounder from Wales: Lloyd George's Career Before the First World War, 1976 p.45: Frank Owen, *Tempestuous Journey: Lloyd George, His Life and Times*, 1955, p. 32

986 David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, 1938, p. 1933

987 McEwen, *Riddell Diaries*, p.257, 16th Feb 1919

understood the hardships faced by the working classes as well as the divided mood of the nation. What becomes most clear from any study on Baldwin was his moderate and compromising nature, his belief in sharing decision making, his thoughtful approach to problems, and his belief in compromise over passionate action. These were qualities that help explain his approach to unrest and Bolshevism during the period and stand him out as a man with almost the direct opposite disposition than Hardliners such as Churchill.

Even when it seemed to many that bloody class war may break out, Baldwin was able to compromise, telling friends in 1925: "If there are those who want to fight the class war, we will beat them by the hardness of our heads and the largeness of our hearts."[988] It was indeed his conviction that if the forces of revolution did exist, then they would be fought, but only as a last resort: "We shall at any rate not fire the first shot. We stand for peace. We stand for the removal of suspicion in the country. We want to create an atmosphere in a new Parliament for a new age, in which the people can come together."[989] It was this attitude that saw him help Britain through one of its most divided and aggravated periods and keep the Hardliners from taking action that could have led to the revolution they so feared. This moderation can in part be explained from his background.

Baldwin was the son of an industrialist and heir to a family firm that prided itself on good relations between staff and employer. The Baldwin iron works were run with the intention of creating a unified and satisfied workforce. Their home was next to the workers' homes. When the workers' cottages became a village, a church and school were built. The family also engaged in social activities. During the 1912 coal strike, allowances were paid to their 4,000 workers from the family's own pocket.[990] Baldwin was raised in an environment that prioritised respect and compromise between the owners and the workers in the family factories, and it was this environment that would have a lasting impact on the young man. One clear thing it taught Baldwin was to understand that the majority of working-class anger was based on conditions and pay – not Bolshevism and revolution.[991] Politically, Baldwin was a Disraelian 'One Nation' Tory and supporter of

[988] Cited in G.M. Young, *Stanley Baldwin*, London, 1952, p. 60
[989] Cited in Morgan, *Ramsay MacDonald*, P. 257
[990] Williamson, *Baldwin*, p.124
[991] Williamson, *Baldwin*, 125

tariff reform.[992] He firmly believed in Britain's established institutions and traditional principles combined with a passion for political democracy, and a social and economic programme designed to benefit the common man and undo divisions that existed between the classes.[993]

Baldwin was seen by many as an 'everyman', and this was an image he sought to convey in order to build up trust from the working and middle classes and ensure that his moderate approach was not easily written off by opponents as partisanship. An example of this can be seen the week before becoming PM when he stated that he looked forward to retiring to his native Worcestershire "to read the books I want, to live a decent life, and to keep pigs".[994] He appealed to those not politically interested and it was this in part that would influence his approach to Bolshevism and allow him to seek compromise and discussion where others may find that path closed to them. As Amery would describe him, he was a political enigma, appealing to a wide range of the nation and with a political outlook based on his upbringing which was sympathetic to the anger of the working classes.[995] It was this view and these influences which pushed him towards a policy of moderation, middle ground and pragmatism during the debates on Bolshevism, but this positioning was no accident – it was instead a conscious positioning based on his beliefs. As Williamson states, describing Baldwin's success simply as the occupation of the 'centre' or 'middle' of politics presumes that a political 'centre' pre-existed in some manifest and stable form, rather than having repeatedly to be defined and constructed.[996] However, as this thesis also shows, Baldwin was not opposed to politicizing class issues if he believed that it would lead to a greater good or elevate him to a position where he could once again lead the nation. To describe him unambiguously as 'consensual', moderate, or conciliatory is to disregard periods when he deliberately sharpened differences, notably over the General Strike and at the 1924 election.[997]

His time in parliament too had an impact on his moderate approach. Not rated a high-flyer, early in his career Baldwin held various posts in the Lloyd George coalition governments of 1916–22, reaching the Cabinet as President of the Board of Trade in 1921. By 1922, the Conservative party was split over coalition, with the

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[992] April 1924 Speech - Baldwin reminded his victorious party that it stood 'for the union of those two nations of which Disraeli spoke two generations ago'. 'Democracy and the Spirit of Service', in Stanley Baldwin, On England (London: Philip Alan, 1926), pp. 70–4, at p. 73

[993] Ian Adams, *Ideology and Politics in Britain Today*. Manchester, 1998

[994] *The Times* 25 May 1923

[995] Amery, *My Political Life*, 1953, II, p.505

[996] Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 9

[997] Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 9

majority of the party organisation and parliamentary party believing that socialism could be best resisted by an independent Conservative party – something Baldwin strongly believed, provided the Party was focused on a One Nation approach.[998] As Financial Secretary in 1919, Baldwin was rising in a political world dominated by growing social unrest. Baldwin described the escalation of both sides with the line, "if you rattle the sabre long enough, you are bound to draw it someday."[999] He called for no provocation on the Tory side and argued that if men like Churchill and Birkenhead were allowed to rise to the fore, then violence would erupt. It was this fear that led him to believe that dialogue must occur between unions and government as continued strikes and unrest would be disastrous for Britain and he focused his mind on long-term compromise. This is not to say, however, that Baldwin was unaware of the threat that Bolshevism wielded domestically and internationally (though he was never overly interested in foreign policy), and he did state to colleagues that the Russian revolution in 1917 could be a threat to British national unity and undo the security that the nation was fighting to achieve.[1000]

Baldwin's time leading up to becoming Prime Minister had added meat to the moral framework he already held. He was convinced that in the strained circumstances the country was in, escalation in word or deed would lead to violence, and possibly to revolution. He was a man who deeply feared the emergence of class war as the principal political divide of the age, and thus focused upon the parallel themes of industrial harmony and the political education of the democratic electorate.[1001] He was even on good terms with Ramsay MacDonald.[1002] Once in office, he was quick to back up his moderate view on the issue of Bolshevism with action. Baldwin spent the next few months of his premiership attempting to change the way in which his party was perceived by those working class voters who were increasingly turning to Labour, suggesting that Conservatism offered a constructive, classless and national alternative to Socialism.[1003] He even sought to bring the Diehards and Hardliners into the fold to ensure that the Party was operating as one. Nationally he referred to his family firm when explaining his view on the unrest, stating that a satisfied and harmonious workforce was the best method of economic efficiency and that an absence of disputes and

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998 Kinnear, *Lloyd George* and Kenneth O. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity*
999 Cited in Young, *Baldwin*, p.33
1000 Young, *Baldwin*, p.59
1001 Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 12
1002 The Baldwin Papers, MacDonald to Baldwin, 4th May 1923, Volume 114 – F.2 Foreign Affairs
1003 Williamson, *Baldwin*, p.29

industrial and social harmony was of the utmost importance.[1004] Baldwin was convinced that Churchill's strategy of draconian measures would split the nation, leading to the outcome Churchill was so desperate to avoid, unrest and a Labour Party pushed towards the extremes.

These views and the importance of class at the time cannot be underestimated. Class had become key in British politics once again and the unrest erupting since the end of the war was based around working-class grievances and the new threat of Bolshevism. This, however, is precisely where Baldwin's importance lies. Class was becoming the dominant issue but how politicians might react remained an open question. Baldwin used class to the Conservative advantage by reformulating Conservatism to retain its existing support from across the class structure and extend it into the newly enfranchised working class.[1005] He understood that the Conservative Party could not prevent the emergence of class politics so its eruption into politics had to be managed. In an unstable environment, politicians "were trying not to merely say what electors wanted to hear but to make electors want them to say what they wanted to say in the first place". Baldwin's message was that the socialist threat could only be defeated by an electorally dominant Conservative party.[1006] It was a message that underscored his commitment to 'One Nation Conservativism' and in part acted as an influence on his moderation. But it was not just politics. Baldwin never agreed with those on the extremes of the Party who were calling for a war on socialism. He was in fact willing to see the good intentions of the Labour Party, especially in their social aims but he disagreed with their methods. Within the Conservative Party, Churchill became the personification of the polar opposite of Baldwin's political views on socialism. As Young states, "Baldwin was at all times sensitive to the moral challenge underlying the Socialist creed: Churchill was not."[1007]

It was all of these factors and influences that would mould Baldwin into the moderate and pragmatic Prime Minister he became and would have a huge impact on his positioning in the debates on Bolshevism and their outcome. As the General Strike grew closer, Baldwin continued to push for unity and peace in the country, avoiding the rhetoric of the Hardliners in his Party and Cabinet. As he himself said in 1925: "We find

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[1004] Williamson, *Baldwin*, p.124
[1005] Taylor, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 431
[1006] Cowling, *The Impact of Labour*, p.5; Taylor, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 435
[1007] Young, *Baldwin*, p. 64

ourselves after these two years in power, in possession of the greatest majority our Party has ever had... how did we get there? It was because, rightly or wrongly we succeeded in creating the impression that we stood for stable Government and for Peace in the country, between all classes of the community."[1008] It was to test the principles of the moderate and sympathetic Baldwin, a man who Ramsden states had "an Everyman quality that would come to the fore in the class issues of the interwar period." As Baldwin himself stated: "There is only one thing which I feel is worth giving one's whole strength to, and that is the binding together of all classes of our people in an effort to make life in this country better in every sense of the word. That is the end and object of my life in politics."[1009] It was this aim that was to be central in his approach as Prime Minister and to the General Strike. Once the dust had settled, his views remained the same: "My mission to lessen the misunderstandings which threaten industrial strikes and to prevent the possibility of such conflicts as the one from which we are emerging... forget all recriminations, waste no time in determining the share of blame. Look forward and not backward."[1010] It was this outlook that so influenced his positioning in the Cabinet clashes on Bolshevism and also ensured that the moderates would emerge successful.

Austen Chamberlain

Other than the two Prime Ministers of the period, Austen Chamberlain was the man who best represented Moderates within Cabinet over the issue of Bolshevism in this period. A major figure in British politics and part of the Chamberlain dynasty, he would serve as both Chancellor and Foreign Secretary between 1917 and 1927. He was perhaps the key adversary to Churchill during the debates surrounding the Russian Revolution and Intervention and his clear thinking, pragmatism and practicality all ensured that he was widely supported by others, both in the Cabinet and in the wider Conservative Party. Before this period, he had already held the role of Chancellor, as well as that of Secretary of State for India and, despite this, and unlike Curzon, he remained unswayed by the threat posed to India and instead focused on the social and economic cost that any draconian campaign against Bolshevism at home, or military reaction abroad, would have on the nation.

[1008] Speech on BBC radio on the General Strike (8 May 1926), as quoted in Baldwin : A Biography by Keith Middlemas and John Barnes (1969), p. 415

[1009] Austen Morgan, *J. Ramsay MacDonald*, Manchester, 1987, pp. 251 - 265

[1010] Cited in Young, *Baldwin*, p.124

A large part of Austen's political viewpoint was related to his father, Joseph, and heavily influenced his views on the working classes, social unrest and the pressures faced by the working man. It was this that perhaps led to his sympathies with many who went on strike during this period, certainly influencing his stance on the General Strike and other mass unrest.[1011] His fiscal prudence and understanding of the financial state that Britain was in after the Great War also played a role in his moderation over Russia, seeing the financial cost as well as the social cost as being too great to pay in order to attack a foreign ideology. While at Rugby and Trinity College, Cambridge, Chamberlain would speak out in favour of Liberal ideals and party policy. Most importantly were his views on military intervention, stating that the Tories were built on such a policy and it was by that, and not the domestic policies they claimed, that the Conservatives "moved and lived and had their being."[1012] This aversion to grand foreign policy in favour of domestic policies also sets him apart from men like Churchill and help to explain his aversion to any form of military intervention in Russia.

The more unkind may also point to his failings as a factor in his moderation. As Dutton stated, Austen Chamberlain lacked the physical and mental strength of his father. He had no taste for prolonged hard work and the anxiety which it brought him. He was also stressed by ambitious or new schemes, preferring to follow the doctrines of more traditional Conservative foreign policy. He was risk-averse.[1013] When arguments arose, he tended to try and seek the path of least resistance. He was also very sensitive of any question on his loyalty – perhaps a reaction to something he disliked in the character of his father. As Dutton stated, there lurked in his mind the uneasy, perhaps unconscious, anxiety that Joseph Chamberlain had not been entirely a gentleman.[1014] All of this may well have played a role in his support of the moderate path against Bolshevism at home and abroad, as well as his loyalty towards the Prime Minister and his view that a pragmatic path must be taken on the issue. He was seen by many as dull; for example, when Balfour discussed with Baldwin the reasons for Chamberlain's shortcoming in politics and unwavering support for Lloyd George, Balfour looked at Stanley Baldwin, his eyes opened to their widest, and said, "Don't you think it's because he is a bore?"[1015] It is certainly true that Chamberlain was viewed by many colleagues as a pedestrian politician compared with his father, and even his brother. Though perhaps unkind, could this lack of imagination on

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[1011] Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain*, p. 28
[1012] Sir. C. Petrie, *The Life and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain*, London, 1939, I. 17
[1013] Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain*, p. 5
[1014] Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain*, p. 6
[1015] T. Jones, i, p. 318

major issues and his loyalty to Lloyd George be an important factor in his role as a moderate?

It was this relationship with Lloyd George that alongside his background and position as Chancellor would prove vital in Chamberlain's positioning as a key moderate. The first dealings between the men came as Lloyd George was Chancellor and Chamberlain was speaking in opposition in reaction to the Finance Bill of 1909. Chamberlain's speech was seen by colleagues as "admiration tinged with awe", saying with "a good deal of what [Lloyd George] said and with a great number of the objects which he set before the House I, for one, heartily sympathise."[1016] Later in 1914, Chamberlain again made clear his view on the Liberal Chancellor Lloyd George, stating, "The Chancellor of the Exchequer has handled a very difficult situation with great tact, skill and judgement".[1017] He dismissed the critics of Lloyd George who said that he meddled too much in foreign policy and led as a dictator, and those who claimed his pragmatism lacked loyalty and honour. He dismissed those in Cabinet who claimed that the PM's lack of principles meant fair opposition and attack was warranted by stating that those "who talk about our principles would find it difficult to put them down with any clarity and prevision upon the proverbial sheet of paper."[1018] By the end of 1919, Chamberlain would complain to friends about his fellow Tories in Cabinet and state that "curiously enough my only ally is the Prime Minister."[1019] Their friendship and political similarities would lead them to form a strong team, including on this issue. Lloyd George would say of Chamberlain in 1921 that "he is loyal, straight and sensible".[1020] Austen stated that the Prime Minister was a colleague of great courtesy and generous support.[1021] This relationship, both personal and political, would have a big impact on Chamberlain's position as a moderate. His understanding of the situation many of the strikers faced was also unlike many of his Conservative colleagues; indeed, as Lloyd George would often say, Chamberlain was more like a Liberal than a Tory.[1022]

It was not just his friendship with Lloyd George that bound Austen Chamberlain to the moderates; it was also his belief that the only way forward for Britain was through Coalition. Chamberlain was a firm believer from

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1016 *Leo Amery's Diary*, 7 May 1909 and Grigg, Lloyd George, London, 1978, p. 194
1017 C. Hazlehurst, *Politicians at War*, 1971 p. 172
1018 Austen Chamberlain Speech to the Oxford Carlton Club, quoted in the Times, 4 March, 1922
1019 Chamberlain Papers, A Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 19 July 1919, AC 5/1/134
1020 LG Papers, Lloyd George to Law, 7 June 1921, LG MSS F/31/1/58
1021 Law Papers, A Chamberlain to Law, 6 January 1921, MSS Law 10/1/8
1022 T. Wilson (ed.), *The Political Diaries of C.P Scott 1911-1928*, London, 1970, p. 429

the start, seen for example when Milner asked him to resign from Asquith's Ministry – he replied a firm no. In Chamberlain's mind, there were real national advantages, due to the war, rise of Labour and other factors, in preserving it.[1023] With the signing of the peace, Chamberlain was in two minds. He was very aware that the fabric of Western society had been shaken, and his correspondence in the last year of the war is full of warnings of potential revolution. However, he also felt that it was key that the coalition be maintained, and would prove a staunch supporter of the PM.[1024] As he would write to a friend, if this was all to be undone, "we should be well on the road which leads to revolution."[1025] What is clear is that he was wary of a future which seemed "full of difficulty and danger, strikes, discontent and much revolutionary feeling", and believed that coalition and moderation were the safest courses of action.[1026] This, combined with his loyalty to Lloyd George, the influence of his father and his firm belief in loyalty, would prove key in his position as a moderate. As Amery records, Chamberlain had a "lack of proportion in dealing with anything that savours of breach of good form, personal loyalty or political etiquette" and going against his political ally, personal friend and Prime Minister would certainly be that.[1027] Chamberlain's strained relationship with many of his more hardline Cabinet colleagues must also be noted, and though no real animosity existed between himself and Churchill, their political ambition often led the two to clash. Indeed, on the issue of Intervention, the rumours in Westminster in the autumn of 1919 that Chamberlain was moved to the Admiralty to make way for Churchill as Chancellor were seen by Henry Wilson as a factor in the two men's refusal to compromise.[1028]

None of this is to say that Chamberlain was not deeply concerned by Bolshevism or saw it as no threat. Indeed, like Baldwin and Lloyd George, he did equate the rise of Labour with that of Bolshevism. As he would say in 1919 of the strikes: "this is not a quarrel between capital and labour or a question of wages or conditions of employment. It is a revolutionary attempt to subvert government and establish class rule."[1029] Chamberlain saw the growth of the Labour Party "as a serious menace to the nation... because of the

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1023 Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain*, p. 127 and 77
1024 Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain*, 143-144
1025 A Chamberlain Papers, A Chamberlain to L. Gell, 22 May 1918, AC 31/1/14
1026 A Chamberlain papers, A Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 9 Nov 1918, AC 5/1/116
1027 L. Amery Diaries, pp. 207-8
1028 Henry Wilson Diary, 25 Oct 1919, cited Gilbert, Churchill iv, 2, p. 941
1029 A Chamberlain Papers, A Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 26 Sept 1919, AC 6/1/355

different way from every other party... it is being controlled and directed from outside parliament."[1030] But despite this realisation of the threat, he did not see violence and extreme measures as the answer, instead voicing moderation and pragmatism. It was this that ensured that he remained a moderate ally of Baldwin in the debates that continued during his leadership. Austen certainly was not as close to Baldwin as he had been to Lloyd George – indeed he saw him as weak – but he did believe in the importance of cooperation, the politics of moderation and understanding of the factors that led men to the picket line – as Baldwin did.[1031] It was these virtues and this politics that would therefore define him during these debates.

Lord Curzon

One of the key members of the Hardliners, especially in his role as foreign secretary lasting from 1919 to 1924, Lord Curzon was a man whose views on the topic of Bolshevism never wavered. Curzon was a well-known and respected figure within British politics, serving as Viceroy of India between 1899 and 1905, Chancellor of Oxford University and then as Foreign Secretary. His role within the Hardliner faction is perhaps second only to Churchill, and his experience, political standing and reputation all would strengthen the faction a great deal during their debates with the more moderate members of Cabinet. His role would only diminish after the election of Stanley Baldwin as Party Leader and Prime Minister and his subsequent ill health and death in 1925.

There are many factors to consider when exploring why Curzon would play such a leading role as a Hardliner over the issue of Bolshevism. His family history, aristocratic background and upbringing all of course played an important part in his character formation, and like many other Hardliners cannot be discounted in creating a natural aversion to an ideology openly against the institutions and traditions that would have moulded him. His right-wing and traditional views on politics were also clear, and his maiden

[1030] A Chamberlain Papers, A Chamberlain to Selborne, 18 April 1921, AC 15/6/16
[1031] Dutton, *Austen Chamberlain*, p. 235-6

speech against Irish Home Rule in 1886 shows this clearly.[1032] His religious views were also highly likely to have played a part. Though not a devout churchman, he retained his faith and as such would have been deeply upset by the militant atheism called for by the followers of Bolshevism. His traditional views on the role of the foreign secretary and the government's relationship with the people also must be noted. On this issue, when the idea of any conflict with Russia or hardline action against domestic unrest was framed in the politics of mass unrest, government fear of socialism and revolution, it is clear that unlike many moderates, Curzon believed that the "right" foreign policy must be enacted regardless of the mass view. One example of this can be seen in his arguments with Lloyd George over the Polish Russo War and the 'Hands Off Russia' movement, in which he pushed for action regardless of the consequences domestically.[1033] This will be explored later in this thesis.

However, it was other factors that perhaps played the largest part. Curzon's political background certainly must be addressed and especially his role as Viceroy of India. Certainly, throughout the debates on Bolshevism both at home and abroad, a key issue for Curzon was Russia's use of propaganda and agents to plant unrest and encourage sedition, especially in India and other more vulnerable areas of the Empire. Curzon would continue to attack Russia on every occasion throughout his time as foreign secretary, stating in April 1923 that the Russians represented the biggest threat to both Britain and her Empire and warning colleagues to remain vigilant.[1034] He would make this point very clearly during the debates surrounding the recognition of Russia regarding trade with Russia and even when it came to the issue of the Polish-Russo War. Curzon was furious by the Russian actions in India, on one occasion writing to Lloyd George to point out that Russia had broken all previous pledges made around propaganda, and arguing that Britain could not stand idly by.[1035] He was a keen imperialist and would fight any threat to the existence and stature of the British Empire – something Bolshevism certainly was. As Leonard Mosley states, he was "a devoted and indefatigable public servant, dedicated to the idea of Empire".[1036] He was also a man of conviction and was

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[1032] Leonard Mosely, *Curzon: The End of an Epoch*, 1961, p. 94

[1033] Cabinet Conclusions, 09 August 1920, CAB 23/22/8

[1034] Christopher Andrew, The British Secret Service and Anglo-Soviet Relations in the 1920s: From the Trade Negotiations to the Zinoviev Letter, *The Historical Journal*, vol 20, 2, (Sept 1977), p.685

[1035] Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George Papers, Curzon to LG, 29 June 1920, LG/F/12/3/49

[1036] Mosley, *Curzon: The End of an Epoch*. p. 288

unlikely to listen to others once his mind was set, as it was on this issue. Amery believed that this was why, unlike others, Curzon would not bend on the matter of Bolshevism.[1037]

Lastly, when it comes to examining his reasoning for joining the Hardliners, Curzon's personal relationships with peers cannot be overlooked – and especially his relationship with Lloyd George. While his own views and friendship with Churchill may well have played a large role in his positioning within Cabinet, the mutual dislike between himself and Lloyd George also played a role. For Curzon, the issue was a key factor in his opposition to the Prime Minister in many matters and undoubtedly it will have played a part in the debates around Bolshevism. Although his own views were key, they may well have made compromise less likely. This is a view backed in a number of Curzon's biographies. For a man with his ego, sense of superiority and background, it was a key factor when combined with his natural instincts against Bolshevism to side with those against the PM.[1038] Curzon also bitterly criticised Lloyd George for his "unusual and illegitimate influence on foreign affairs", which perhaps also led to his heels being well and truly dug in on matters such as this.[1039] It was a view shared by both men, as the Prime Minister was later to say on his Cabinet at the time that "They were all men of substance – well, except Curzon."[1040]

Neville Chamberlain

A man destined to have a huge impact on both the future of the Conservative Party and the nation, Neville Chamberlain like his brother, Austen, was deeply influenced by his father Joseph and his upbringing. He entered Parliament in 1918 and held his first ministerial posts under Bonar Law before becoming Minister for Health in 1923 – a position he would hold until 1929 apart from a spell as Chancellor under Baldwin from August 1923 until January 1924. Throughout his time in both Bonar Law and Stanley Baldwin's governments, Chamberlain largely followed the lead of his older brother and was a steady member of the moderate group when it came to the threat of Bolshevism. There were during this period times in which he

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[1037] Leo Amery, My political Life, vol. II, London, 1953, pp. 232-3 and British Library, Cecil Papers. Mss. 51076/37-8: R Cecil to Lloyd George, 4 April 1919

[1038] Lord Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon*, London, 1928, pp. 316-7: K. Rose, *Superior Person: A Portrait of Curzon and his Circle in Late Victorian England*, London, 1969, p. 379 and A.J Sharpe, The Foreign Office in Eclipse, *The Journal of the Historical Association*, vol 61, no. 202, June 1976, p. 198

[1039] Lloyd George Papers, House of Lords Records Office, F/13/1/1: Curzon to Lloyd George, 10 July 1920

[1040] The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Ronaldshay. *The Life of Curszon* Vol.3.

was forced to accept the logic of the Hardliners that harsh measures were necessary but by and large we can place him firmly in Baldwin and Austen's camp.

His first real positioning on the issue came during the coal strike of 1920 when as a backbencher he declared his belief to the Commons that the coal industry must be held responsible for the welfare and happiness of its workforce, arguing that the strikes were to a large degree a symptom of their failure to do this.[1041] It was a view born from his childhood and the ideology of his father but it is clearly one that held a great sway over him during the debates around Bolshevism between then and 1927. The moderates by 1923, however, were much more factionalised than the Hardliners, who unified over the external threat they sought to combat, and the personality clashes between Baldwin and Austen Chamberlain and Austen and Amery did impact on Neville's position within the group.[1042] However, Neville would play an important role within the moderates as a peacemaker, supporting Baldwin in the leadership contest against Curzon, bringing Austen further into the group and acting as a confident to Amery.[1043] Neville and Austen also stood for a conservative working class viewpoint that was in direct contrast to the views of Hardliners such as Churchill, and this clash would be a large factor in the way in which the moderates and Hardliners were separated in Cabinet.

By 1924, both Chamberlains were already angry at the way in which Churchill had linked great swathes of the working class with militancy and Bolshevism, worrying that rhetoric of that kind may lead to real extremism.[1044] It was Neville who for a variety of reasons, not all of them in line with Baldwin's own thoughts, did a great deal to put the ideas of the moderates into action, pushing through a number of important social policies such as attempting to tackle the housing shortage and end the issue of urban slum housing (something considered a factor in fostering extremist views in poor areas). In the countryside, he implemented the Rural Housing Workers' Bill to improve the workers' housing stock.[1045] As a mayoral candidate in Birmingham, he made clear his belief in schemes such as a form of minimum wage, and while mayor he worked hard to improve conditions in the city.[1046] With the signing of the Housing Act in 1923,

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1041 House of Commons Debate, 30 June 1920, vol 131, cc585-586
1042 Amery Diary, 19 June 1923
1043 University of Birmingham, N Chamberlain papers, N.C Diary, 22 May, 1923, NC 2/22
1044 Birmingham University Library, N Chamberlain Papers, N.C Diary, 17 and 21 March 1924, NC2/22
1045 Self, *Neville Chamberlain*, pp. 110-113
1046 Self, *Neville Chamberlain*, p. 91

Chamberlain had achieved a key aim of his political vision for peace among the social classes. With the Prime Minister's support, he also brought in the Rent and Mortgage Restrictions Bill in May 1923, which ensured that rent controls continued as they had done throughout the war, and in doing so helped the working class to afford homes.[1047] With these Acts helping people get on the housing ladder, and ensuring the poorest in society could have decent living conditions, he hoped, like Baldwin, that the grievances of the left could be lessened.

In 1925, Chamberlain wrote to his sister Hilda, remarking that through his polices, he and the Baldwin Government were "building up a whole new class of good citizens."[1048] It was the actions of his hardline colleagues that concerned him the most, believing that men such as Churchill, with the mistrust that the working class had for him and his allies, could lead to a situation where Labour moderates were driven into the hands of extremists.[1049] Neville Chamberlain made clear his support, writing to the Prime Minister: "Lincoln had at all costs to preserve the unity of the North. You have to preserve the unity of the Country."[1050] In the General Strike, he remained angry at the combativeness of his colleagues and saw such a route as disastrous for the nation – something influenced no doubt by his father and upbringing in Birmingham.[1051]

Chamberlain's role within the Baldwin government as a key moderate is beyond doubt and though his reasoning was based on a range of views and factors, his upbringing certainly had an effect. His time in Birmingham had a long-lasting effect on him. Perhaps relevant to future views on the militancy of the working classes was the fact that unlike other parts of the midlands, Birmingham did not mine coal or make iron/steel on a great scale. Rather it covered a wide range of industry.[1052] He was a strong believer in reforming cities and towns to offer the best for people of all classes, believing that through reform, everyone must get the chance to enhance their personality and get decent conditions in life.[1053] Chamberlain was also

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[1047] Self, *Neville Chamberlain*, p. 91

[1048] Chamberlain to Hilda, 28th October 1925 as cited in Stuart Ball and Ian Holiday (Edited), Mass Conservatism: The Conservative and the Public since the 1800s, Abington, 2013, p. 62

[1049] Self, *Neville Chamberlain*, p. 99

[1050] Quoted in Young, *Stanley Baldwin*, pp. 101-2

[1051] N Chamberlain Papers, N.C to A.V.C, 1 May (continued 2nd May) 1926, NC 1/26/361: Robert Self (ed.), Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters, vol II, May 1926, p. 346

[1052] David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain* P. 129

[1053] David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain* P. 130

appreciative of the efforts of local trade unions during the war in Birmingham, especially their efforts to ensure that all classes pulled together in the war effort and their decision not to oppose conscription further in 1915 in aid of the war effort – an issue that Chamberlain had corresponded with Amery about.[1054] Chamberlain's views on the development of British industry therefore were different from those of his fellow Conservatives, and especially the Hardliners. He believed that although an increase in the state's role in society was a small move towards socialism, that the war had shown that it must be done, both to quell any future unrest and to reward those who had fought.[1055] He also believed that the minimum wage should be established by law, stating that for society you must pay your men a decent wage.[1056] Perhaps telling is Chamberlain's affection for the book by the Hammonds, *The Town labourer 1760-1832*, which he declared excited his sympathy for the working man: "Although things have immensely improved I feel we are still rather inclined to the attitude which looks upon the lower classes as not really fitted to enjoy themselves decently."[1057]

In 1918, once an MP, Chamberlain put forward in Parliament his ideas of great social reform, advocating national housing, a minimum wage, maternity and infant welfare, reform of tax to favour family and the development of agriculture – and all paid by the state. He believed that it would be part of the great move for capital and labour to work together, and as part of this deal he believed that pledges given to the trade unions during the war must be kept.[1058] In Parliament, Chamberlain was a man with few allies; he was therefore hard to place in the parliamentary clashes over Bolshevism in his early years as an MP. He agreed with some of the Diehards some of the time. He admired Bonar Law and Lloyd George's skill and politics, and wrote that Churchill's wit and intelligence were admirable. However, aside from his allegiance to Austen, he found it hard to pick a side in the Lloyd George Coalition, believing that the PM could not be trusted wholly.[1059]

By 1921, however his optimism over the future of workers relations was undermined by the strikes that had been ongoing since the end of the war. On Black Friday, when the miners (for whom Chamberlain strangely

[1054] N Chamberlain Archives, N/C to Amery, 29 August 1915, NC 7/2/20
[1055] David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain* P. 182
[1056] David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain* P. 183
[1057] Birmingham University Library, Chamberlain Letters to Hilda, NC to HC, 19th Sept 1917, NC 18/1/1-1168
[1058] David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain* P 263, his manifesto can be found in the Chamberlain Archives, NC 5/12/9
[1059] David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain* P. 266

had little sympathy) were deserted by the other unions, Chamberlain had addressed his local railwaymen, stating they should consider their families and society before striking – many did listen. He remained adamant that dialogue and compromise was the only course of action to take. [1060] Perhaps key in this moderation was the fact that Chamberlain's view of socialism was much different from that of Churchill. Like his father, he believed that people must be given power but not to meddle with the intricacies of government, so as to avoid weak government. His opposition to socialism was therefore not deeply rooted in ideology or political principle – rather he believed that it undermined politics by offering generous solutions without the resources or planning of how to implement them.[1061] It was a view that would have a large impact on him during this period and would fashion him into one of the key figures in the moderate faction from his rise to Cabinet until 1927.

Arthur Balfour

A key figure in the Conservative Party, a previous party leader and Prime Minister, Balfour commanded a great deal of respect among his peers and backbenchers alike. Serving as foreign secretary until October 1919 and then Lord President of the Council under both David Lloyd George and Stanley Baldwin, he would add weight when intervening in the debates surrounding Bolshevism. It is worth noting that Balfour is a difficult man to find many sources on as he never kept a diary and was generally uninterested in publishing any kind of autobiography. As his biographers Mackay and Egremont note, he largely avoided writing in any form, with the best source of information coming from the Balfour Papers at the British library due to the fact that copies of the letters Balfour dictated were kept.

Balfour largely remained aloof during the debates over Russia and his interventions are infrequent. He must be included in this analysis, however, due to the weight that he brings when he took sides in debates and his importance in Cabinet and the Conservative Party. As the previous analyses of the Cabinet shows, he was on the fringes of the Hardliners, showing more moderation than Churchill but certainly supportive of tough measures against any form of Bolshevik threat to Britain. Perhaps it was only his age, his focus on his own

[1060] David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain* P. 277
[1061] David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain* P.410

policy aims such as his work around ensuring a home for the Jewish people in Palestine, and his position of respected elder statement to all sides of the party that kept him from the fray – or perhaps deeper influences were at work.

Balfour's main period of activity in terms of Bolshevism came during his period as foreign secretary and the debates surrounding the Russian Revolution, civil war and intervention. His personal view was largely influenced at the time by the Great War and what would serve to do the most damage to Germany and her Allies. He was deeply disturbed by the rise of Bolshevism and agreed with Milner on the matter of the White Armies and Britain's moral obligation to assist them; however, he was unprepared to support any grand schemes, even after the armistice.

As Hankey describes in February 1918, on the matter of Russia he remained aloof: "Balfour as usual, rather on the hedge between these (L.G., Cecil and Churchill)."[1062] He did support the Hardliners in their support for the White Army and agreed that British garrisons must remain in Russia; however, he saw any return to Tsardom as "dangerous to British interests… for it would almost certainly be dependent on German support."[1063] Though it is clear that his sympathies and most of his active support lay with the Hardliners, it is also notable that in the end he refused to back Churchill on intervention, believing it "folly, from a purely military point of view", even if not from a moral one.[1064]

To understand Balfour's positioning within the Cabinet splits and his intermittent support for the Hardliners, it is important to analyse his background and influences. His upbringing was one of Christian dedication, with daily Bible classes led by his mother, Lady Blanche Balfour. His father died while Balfour was a boy and his uncle Lord Salisbury was a major influence. He was a traditional Tory, unchanging, pro-Empire and traditional.[1065] Balfour's Christianity was a major influence on him. He believed that humans needed a framework and order to protect themselves from anarchy and that the state should attach itself to this support and link with the established church. These views perhaps are a major factor in his later views on

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1062 Cited in Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets Volume* 1:1877-1918, Maryland, p. 494
1063 British Museum, Balfour Archives, BM. Add. Mss. 49692. F.295-6
1064 Cabinet Archives, The Eastern Committee, 47th Meeting, 9th December 1918, CAB 27/24
1065 Egremont, *Balfour,* P.41

Bolshevism – an ideology that sought to end the church itself, seemed to promote anarchy, and would collapse the state and government as he knew it.[1066]

Like many of the Hardliners, Balfour was a keen supporter of Empire throughout his career, even remarking to Baldwin in his final letter to him before his death that India was key. [1067] The threat that Russia posed to India and the Empire was heightened by the rise of Bolshevism and its anti-colonial and capitalist messaging, and would no doubt have had an impact on the traditionalist, empirical, foreign secretary. In terms of one of the other key questions of the day, Balfour was also a keen opponent of Home Rule, believing that reconciliation in Ireland could only ever be achieved within the framework of the United Kingdom. A staunch Unionist, he believed that the alternative was Irish chaos. He was conscious of the thin line of authority that he believed divided civilisation from barbarism: "To allow the latter to win" he wrote of the Nationalists in 1888, "is simply to give up civilisation."[1068] Again here, we see a link with the men who made up the core of the Hardliners and the Diehards – it is a world view that can be expanded to explain their views on the collapse of the old world order in Russia and the growth of Bolshevism with its links to anarchy and the uprooting of institutions. He was also a staunch anti-socialist and made this clear throughout his career, like Churchill and others seeing the face of extremism, Bolshevism and violence behind what he believed was merely a mask of Labour Party respectability.

From this, Balfour's role as a Hardliner seems an obvious one; however, as we have seen, it was not one he would play to the full. The answer to why not perhaps lies deeper than merely his age and other interests. Though, as noted, he was a man who wished there to be no distraction from the important task of ending the war with Germany, this is not to say that he was a warmonger or took any great pleasure from the conflict. While in many ways a politician who naturally would fit into the Hardliner mould, he had also been deeply affected by the war. He had a number of relations serving and his young nephew Oswald was wounded a number of times. Many of his close friends also endured hardship, with Lady Wemyss and Lady Desborough both losing two sons.[1069]As foreign secretary during the War Cabinet, Balfour was acutely aware of how

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[1066] Egremont, *Balfour*, P.49
[1067] Ruddock F. Mackay, *Balfour, Intellectual Statesman*, 37
[1068] Balfour Archives, British Museum, BM. Add. Mss. 49826. F.300-1
[1069] Egremont, *Balfour*, P.282

much such a conflict cost in all senses, and this certainly influenced his concern at the rhetoric, schemes and action of men like Churchill when it came to action against both Bolshevism at home and abroad.

Though he was very close to Churchill, seeing him as the only other member of the War Cabinet who was a man of action, not just talk, the war had also greatly increased his respect for Lloyd George and his views (much different to his own), stating to Law that "our friend is, I think, the most remarkable single figure produced by the Great War."[1070] He had also seen a side to his friend Churchill that caused him concern. He would become an advocate for more cautious warfare than some of his colleagues, notably Churchill, who he had warned against the Dardanelles gamble with concerns about the strength needed to succeed in such an operation.[1071] Indeed, he had taken the step of warning Churchill personally in a letter that April 1915, stating that "I cannot help being very anxious about the fate of any military attempt upon the peninsula."[1072] It was the ignoring of these many warnings that led to Balfour's general unease at Churchill and his schemes, and could have played a large role in his refusal to offer support on the issue of intervention and Russia. Balfour was also at odds with other key Hardliners, notably Curzon, the two of whom had been rivals and personal enemies throughout their careers. Balfour had refused to endorse Curzon for honours in 1905, and Curzon had tried to discredit him ever since.[1073]

It is perhaps for these reasons, alongside his age and slight weariness that led to Balfour's position on the fringes of the Hardliners. He was an admirer of Lloyd George and Churchill for very different reasons and perhaps this too led him to take a more measured position in these debates. In the end, he would leave the position that would have meant a key role in the issue of Bolshevik Russia too soon to be forced to pick sides, resigning from his role as Foreign Secretary after Versailles in 1919. He went on to serve as Lord President of the Council from then until 1922 and next in government under Baldwin from April 1925 to June 1929. During the period from 1920 to 1929, he was largely unrepresented in the Cabinet debates over the issue of Bolshevism or strikes, being preoccupied by other issues, although he did raise his head to agree with those calling for harsh post-General Strike union legislation in late 1926.

1070 Egremont, *Balfour*, P.282
1071 War Cabinet minutes, 13 January 1915, CAB 22/1/2
1072 Balfour Papers, The British Library, 49694, ff. 105-7, 8 April 1915
1073 Mackay, *Balfour, Intellectual Statesman*, 239

Alfred Milner

Alfred Milner, later Viscount Milner, was a major figure in British politics over a period stretching over twenty years. He was to play an influential leadership role in the formulation of foreign and domestic policy between the mid-1890s and early 1920s and from December 1916 to November 1918 was one of the most important members of David Lloyd George's War Cabinet. He was Minister without Portfolio in the War Cabinet from 1916 and Secretary of State for War from April 1918 until January 1919. These were roles in which the issue of Bolshevism both in Russia and at home would have to be acknowledged and his interest and involvement in the topic can also be seen from his leading of the British Delegation to Russia in 1917 alongside Field Marshall Wilson. Yet despite this, as with other historic big beasts of the Cabinet (such as Balfour), he often remained aloof from the wider factionalised Cabinet disagreements over the threat of the Bolsheviks and how best to confront them, intervening only infrequently on matters of real importance to him. His time in the Cabinet would end early in terms of this analysis, lasting until 1921 when he departed depart the Cabinet. He died in 1925 before the General Strike came to pass.

Despite the infrequency of his involvement, it is still important to analyse Milner's motives and categorise his position within the splits in Lloyd George's Cabinet. Certainly, he was not uninvolved as his interventions when they came were both staunch and noticed by both colleagues and the press. He was in the instances of his intervention a Hardliner, supporting the faction on a range of issues and only differing from Churchill (and some other members of the group) in his reluctance to break from the Prime Minister when it was clear that no compromise could be reached. It therefore seems that especially in the debates surrounding intervention that he can be counted as a Hardliner, though again he is a complicated figure. A man with considerable loyalty towards Lloyd George, it was only his depth of feeling on the matter that pushed him towards intervention and open disagreement with the moderates in Cabinet. His biographer, Terrance O'Brien, describes Milner as an idealist with intense moral convictions, yet a realist with awareness of the practical limitations of his schemes. In witnessing the fate of Russia and the rise of the Bolsheviks, Milner's keen interest in Russian affairs and recent mission there certainly had an impact. It is telling that Robert Bruce Lockhart, who accompanied him, stated that "until the end of his life, Lord Milner never forgot those

three days in Moscow".[1074]

From early in the revolution and despite the wider issue of the war, Milner was clear that the chaos in Russia was dangerous for Britain and that order must be found and backed to stop the Bolsheviks.[1075] He would be one of the first to advocate troops being sent to secure key positions in and around Russia and would set the scene for the policies that Churchill would soon endorse and that led to the rise of the Hardliner faction.[1076] He, like Balfour, however did see the issue of Russia as secondary to that of Germany and the war. Alongside Balfour and Milner, he believed strongly that Britain's former allies, the White Russians, must be supported in Russia as a matter of honour, British values, sense and military necessity for the British Empire. However, in the end he would compromise and never advocated mass intervention, and eventually largely left the issue of Bolshevism alone to focus on his role as new Secretary of State for the Colonies and his commitments at the Peace Conference in Paris. Perhaps also key in this was his belief that though Bolshevism in Russia was terrible and dangerous to the British Empire and Europe, he would never seem as concerned as many Hardliners that the events in Russia would lead to mass unrest at home, arguing that the only reason people feared so, and agitation existed among the working men, was the war causing "frayed nerves and tempers".[1077] This more moderate outlook is seen on the only other area of debate on the topic he entered into – the clash between Hardliners and pragmatists over demobilisation and the police strikes.[1078]

But what led towards this sometimes-contradictory set of views on the issue of Bolshevism and a viewpoint that meant he was certainly a Hardliner – but not one with the ultimate dedication to the destruction and danger of Bolshevism as Churchill? The influences in Milner's early life are similar to others in the Hardliner faction. Raised in a religious and traditional family, sent to public school and then entering Oxford, he was a firm believer in Empire and the traditional structures of government, monarchy and the British system of democracy. These are perhaps obvious but at the same time they are quite clear forces behind his abhorrence at the Bolshevik rise in Russia and the system of revolution they proposed. A belief in a Greater

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[1074] R.H. Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent,* London, 1932, pp. 160-5

[1075] Bodleian Oxford, Milner Papers, Letter to Sir George Buchannan the British Ambassador in Petrograd, Dated May 15th 1917, MS. Milner dep. 354, fols. 98-100

[1076] Bodleian Oxford, Milner Papers, Note to Balfour January 1918, MS. Milner dep. 378

[1077] Milner Papers, MS. Milner dep. 135

[1078] Lloyd George Papers, Milner to Lloyd George, 13 November 1918, Lloyd George MSS. F/38/4/24: Bodleian Oxford, Milner Papers, Diary Entry December 1918, MS. Milner, dep. 90: War Cabinet and Cabinet Minutes, 30th August 1918, CAB 23/7/29

Britain was key to his thinking at Oxford, along with the idea of the merit of imperialism. He was also against Home Rule – something that links many of the Hardliners but which alone is not enough to discern them from their more pragmatic colleagues. Milner himself also admitted as a young man that his natural view on Ireland was that some form of Home Rule was preferable but that he had taken the opposite view after studying the matter.[1079] His divergence from Churchill in terms of domestic labour as a new force is perhaps a hangover from his early interest in some forms of socialism and he was certainly also influenced by more reformist thinkers such as Arnold Toynbee.[1080] Such was his sympathy for the issue of working-class representation and his keen academic interest in socialism that he even gave lectures on the subject in 1882.[1081]

Once in Parliament, Marlowe notes that Milner had a reputation as a non-partisan politician, with many thinking that he was moderate and safe. However, others describe his refusal to bend from a view once he adopted it, as his contemporary John Buchan wrote many years later: "When he had satisfied himself about a particular course… his mind seemed to lock down on it, and after that there was no going back."[1082] On Bolshevism, however, it seems that both were true: he was sure on his convictions around the ideology and its danger to the world, yet was willing to take the middle-road approach due to the economic and military realities that existed in post-war Britain. His hardline traits were clear from an early stage. Milner was a key advocate of National Service as the scope of the First World War became clear to those in Westminster. He was supported in this by other men who would be Hardliners, Churchill and Curzon – perhaps a sign of their hawkish approach even from 1914. Lloyd George, however, was also in support, aware from 1914 that the war must be fought wholeheartedly.[1083]

In his letters from an early stage, he shows his admiration for Balfour, which may be important in his later intervention debate input. He describes him in one early letter as "a statesman of the first order".[1084] This also helps to explain the similarities in their support of the Hardliners, which then softens as they realise that the

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[1079] Marlowe, *Milner*, p.15
[1080] Marlowe, *Milner*, pp. 5-8
[1081] Milner Papers, Notes for Lectures on Socialism, MSS. Milner dep. 107-10
[1082] John Buchan, *Memory Hold the Door*, London, 1940, p.100
[1083] Marlowe, *Milner*, p. 263
[1084] Milner Papers, Milner to Goschen, MS Milner dep 7, 231

arguments put forward by Lloyd George and Austen Chamberlain hold real weight in terms of capability. Milner's allies in politics included Steel-Maitland and Amery, remaining very close to the latter for their twenty years of shared time in government.[1085] In terms of clear Moderates and Hardliners, he was not on friendly terms with Bonar Law, though he was with Henry Wilson and Steel-Maitland.[1086] Perhaps these links with men who would be seen as key moderates informed his decision to push for support of the Whites and against the Bolsheviks but to stop before any precipice was reached. What is also intriguing is that while he was respected by and respected Lloyd George, he was also seen by many of the Diehards in the party as one of them, largely due to his strict faith and conservatism on Empire and Unionism.[1087] Despite this belief, he remained quietly supportive, or at least not publicly opposed to, the Prime Minister. Indeed the few times he let off steam was only to his closest companions, such as Amery when he confided that he was "feeling disgruntled owning to the PM's lack of method."[1088]

Milner's views on domestic agitation and the influence of Bolshevism are perhaps the most opaque. In terms of the police and army strikers, he certainly appears to have understood their concerns and agreed with the moderates that it was not an issue of Bolshevism but one of anger at conditions and circumstance. However, when it came to the strikes that occurred from 1917 until 1921, he is less forgiving, and yet surprisingly quiet within Cabinet debates. Marlowe and O'Brien state that he was aghast at the more extreme elements of socialism (for example, the ILP) for not having a strong patriotic core – something he believed British Socialism must show. With the Russian Revolution, his mind was hardened further, linking the ILP and other domestic parties with Bolshevism and revolution. He regarded the spread of communism as a cancer and was vocal in his dismay at its support from the left in Britain.[1089] He was also clear that domestically the Bolsheviks and their allies at home such as the ILP were spreading subversion and had connections with Russian revolutionaries. In correspondence with Ian Colvin of the *Morning Post*, he wrote that tougher measures were needed for working-class troublemakers, saying that "[we must] go for the agitators. The removal of grievances alone will not disarm them. They are out for mischief."[1090] It is this statement that

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1085 Milner Papers, A Note by Lady Milner Recording his Views on Amery, MS. Milner dep. 667
1086 Marlowe, *Milner,* p.223
1087 Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, I, p. 622
1088 Milner Papers, correspondence to Amery July 1917, MS. Milner dep. 354 VI
1089 Marlowe, *Milner,* p.245
1090 Milner Papers, letter to Ian Colvin of the Morning Post, dated July 1917, MS. Milner dep. 197

perhaps tells us why Milner was so torn on the issue of domestic unrest. He did believe that agitators and revolutionaries were at work in causing much of the unrest, and yet unlike Churchill he did not feel that these views had been spread among the normal working man on strike. It was a two-part issue: deal with the agitators who will push for unrest whatever the conditions, and then deal with conditions to help the worker who is easily led to strike as a result of them. It is this understanding of the complexity of the situation, one that men such as Churchill, Birkenhead and Joynson-Hicks often appear to lack (or forget in their passion), that marks Milner out as a man slightly aloof from the debate. He was certainly a Hardliner on the issues of Bolshevism abroad, and indeed on many aspects of the unrest at home; however, he was unwilling to throw caution to the wind to pursue either in the manner that Churchill advocated, and too aware of the issues around social unrest to demonise the working class and mainstream socialism.

Lord Birkenhead

Lord Birkenhead, formerly F. E. Smith, was to become a key member of Hardliner group in the later period that this thesis covers. From the Russian Revolution until January 1919, he would hold the role of Attorney General before his rise to Lord Chancellor – a post he held until October 1922. Perhaps in an attempt to remove him from the political debates surrounding domestic Bolshevism, Baldwin brought him back into Cabinet in 1924 but as Secretary of State for India. A close friend of Churchill, it was from the start likely that he would give some support to the Hardliners, and indeed in later years he would be a key member, but under Lloyd George he remained largely silent. Until the 1920s, he was largely a member of the third silent group within Cabinet, with Lloyd George describing him as "reserved and generally silent".[1091] Hankey felt the same and noted to his colleagues that he was a "strong silent man".[1092] Indeed, as Campbell points out, due to this he often was not represented in the notes of Cabinet debates at the time – and one might summarise that he never spoke at all at this point in the debate on Bolshevism.[1093] However, it is interesting to note that in later life, when he became much more hardline on Bolshevism, Lord Birkenhead referenced some regret regarding his inactivity during his early career: "I was never able to share the sanguineness with

[1091] Lloyd George foreword to Birkenhead's biography, Thornton Butterworth, Birkenhead: *Fredrick Edwin, Earl of Birkenhead*, vol II, London, 1935, p. 12
[1092] K. Middlemas (ed.*), Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary*, Oxford, 1969, p. 234
[1093] John Campbell, *F.E Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead*, London, 1991

which he (Churchill) surveyed each new attempt to dislodge the Soviet murderers. But, at least his impulses were sound."[1094] It is important to note that his background in law and his time spent as Attorney General and Lord Chancellor both established Birkenhead as a man of importance in Parliament and Cabinet and added weight to both his own and the Hardliners' position in the debates around union recognition and the General Strike, in which he would play a large part.

Birkenhead's position within the Cabinet groupings over Russia was a complicated and changing one. He would become one of the key Hardliners in the Cabinet but as the Russian revolution took place and the threat became clear, he was seemingly slow to come to the conclusion that it must be stopped at all costs. As the First World War came to an end, he would argue against Churchill on the merits of making some form of deal with Russia, arguing that Russia would be best tempered by bringing her back into the embrace of more civilised nations.[1095] This early stance stands out compared to the position that Birkenhead would go on to hold in Cabinet debates two years later – that of a staunch Hardliner and crusader against Bolshevism in all its forms.[1096] Such was his anger at events under Baldwin that he was also heavily involved in the failed coup to oust Baldwin in favour a new Coalition Government. As Birkenhead informed Lord Riddell, it was his belief that the "incapacity and inferiority of the present government would prove so ineffective in difficult times ahead that the country will soon get tired of them and call for abler men."[1097] By the start of 1925, Birkenhead was one of the key figures arguing for more action against the Bolsheviks.[1098]

It is this mixed reaction to Bolshevism in the period, with early indifference and moderation making way for later hardline views and almost obsession that makes Birkenhead such an interesting figure in the Cabinet splits over Bolshevism. This is perhaps explained by his mixed background but may also perhaps be more a symptom of his range of interests and focus, with his full attention only turned to the issue of domestic unrest and Bolshevism as the strikes intensified after the war. His background also though is of importance. Unlike the aristocratic Hardliners Curzon and Churchill, Birkenhead was brought up in Birkenhead and attended college in Liverpool for a number of years before his acceptance to Oxford. This working-class city must

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1094 *Sunday Times*, 3 March, 1924

1095 Campbell, *Birkenhead*, 592 and Inbal Rose, *Conservationism and FP during the Lloyd George Coalition 1918-1922* – p. 38

1096 Campbell, *Birkenhead*, p. 534

1097 Lord Riddell, *Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, 1918-1923*, London, 1933, p. 400

1098 Amery Diary, 16 Febuary 1927: India Office, Secretary of State/Viceroy Correspondence 1924-28, F.E to Irwin, 26 May 1927

have led to certain sympathies in the young Birkenhead and understanding of the problems faced by the working classes. His early life in Liverpool also exposed him to the city's mood of popular Toryism, characterised by patriotism, pride in Empire, armed forces and the Boer War. It also saw contempt for Liberal pacifists, Little Englanders and foreign ideas and ideologies, all of which may well explain his support for the hardline cause in Cabinet.[1099]

Birkenhead was also brought up a staunch Protestant, believing that the doctrines of his faith were a clear guide for society and the individual.[1100] It would be understandable if this played a role in his dislike of Bolshevism and to some extent Socialism, as they reject the traditional structures of society around church, royalty and government and advocate change. The Russian Bolsheviks' destruction of the churches was certainly well-known throughout Western Europe as can be seen in the debates referenced in this thesis. Like all of the Hardliners, he was also a Unionist and strongly opposed to Home Rule. He strongly identified with traditional society and the Crown and saw Home Rule as an affront to both.

It is perhaps his views on the working classes – how best to support and represent them and their well-being – that make the most interesting reading when analysing his Hardliner views. Birkenhead's early career saw him state in his acceptance speech to Parliament that: "The real future of the Conservative Party lay in an understanding with those who represented the working men of this country."[1101] Interestingly, this belief in the working men and ensuring that they were represented and supported in part can be shown to be a major part of his hatred of socialism and Bolshevism, seeing them as false ideologies that corrupted and led astray the working classes. As the representative of a large working-class city, he saw himself as a representative of unorganized labour – a group whose interests he believed were not represented by organised Labour, Trade Unionism or Socialism.[1102] By the onset of the Great War, he was convinced that the new wave of strikes and actions of organised Labour were not industrial in nature but political. He also refused to recognise that there was any need or sense in a form of class struggle as advocated by the left, seeming in his words self-

[1099] Campbell, *Birkenhead*, p. 90
[1100] Campbell, *Birkenhead*, p. 125
[1101] Liverpool Daily Post, 18 Febuary 1905
[1102] Campbell, *Birkenhead*. p 155

defeating nonsense.[1103] Campbell states that Birkenhead was a Diehard in view – something similar to many other leading Hardliners. He believed that the patriotic working class he prided himself in representing had gone, replaced with militant and revolutionary views. Where he differed on this with Law and Baldwin was that they realised or believed that that was not the case, and that the patriotic hard-working working class had now just found a home in a moderate Labour Party.[1104] It was, however, for Birkenhead a situation in which even if they remained patriots they had been duped by a party with tame men in front and extremists behind. Birkenhead held a view that clashed with the new mood of the nation – not least his idea of a contented proletariat treated well enough by the political elite to keep them in place.[1105] This was an issue for the moderates too; Cowling has written that Baldwin feared Birkenhead's influence on events as "the philosophy of self-seeking propagated by Birkenhead would stimulate among the working classes a reciprocal hostility to ruling classes which they already thought was dangerous."[1106]

Birkenhead's political allies also undoubtedly had some impact on his position within the Hardliners. His greatest friend in the Commons was Winston Churchill. Campbell describes it as the truest and deepest friendship of the two men's lives.[1107] It was this link that may well have been a major factor in Birkenhead's role within the Hardline grouping – almost certainly not out of pure loyalty but from an understanding of his friends' views, sympathy with them and perhaps a willingness to contemplate them due to the bonds of friendship that already existed. He was also close to Lloyd George and certainly saw the coalition as vital due to its ability to stop Labour. Perhaps this is why Birkenhead toed the party line during this period more than under Baldwin and accepted his leader's views on Russia. He also seems to have shown real sympathy with Lloyd Georges' view that the best way to ensure a safe and peaceful Europe was to recreate trade around Europe, including with Germany and Russia: "We who won the war fail to take the necessary steps to effect such a reconstruction of Europe as will mark trade possible to a Europe that will perish unless trade is restored."[1108] It is therefore perhaps understandable that Birkenhead did not share Churchill's views on intervention in Russia, though he was perhaps already an ardent anti-Bolshevik. Like Lloyd George, he

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[1103] Campbell, *Birkenhead* , p.367
[1104] Campbell, *Birkenhead*, p 627
[1105] Campbell, *Birkenhead* p. 627
[1106] Cowling, *The Impact of Labour*, Cambridge, 1971, p. 243
[1107] Campbell, *Birkenhead*, p.143
[1108] Australia/New Zealand Dinner, 19 July 1922 as cited in Campbell, Birkenhead, p. 590

perhaps believed that the best policy was to bring Russia back into the embrace of Europe and through those means undermine the excesses and views of the revolutionaries who had taken root there.[1109] It is this view that also can explain Birkenhead's early reaction to domestic unrest and the rise of Labour, seeking to bring them instead into a coalition that could represent them and warning them of the perils of Socialism. Only when this has failed did he believe that the only course of action remaining was to crush the ideologies he saw as so dangerous to the future of the nation and the people in all classes who lived there.

[1109] Campbell, *Birkenhead* , p.592

Abbreviations

Abbreviations used in the referencing of this thesis by order of appearance:

Vol – Volume

Cols – Columns

WSC – Winston Churchill

LG – David Lloyd George

AC – Austen Chamberlain

NC – Neville Chamberlain

BM – Arthur Balfour

LAW – Bonar Law

JRM – Ramsey MacDonald

JIX – William Joynson-Hicks

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